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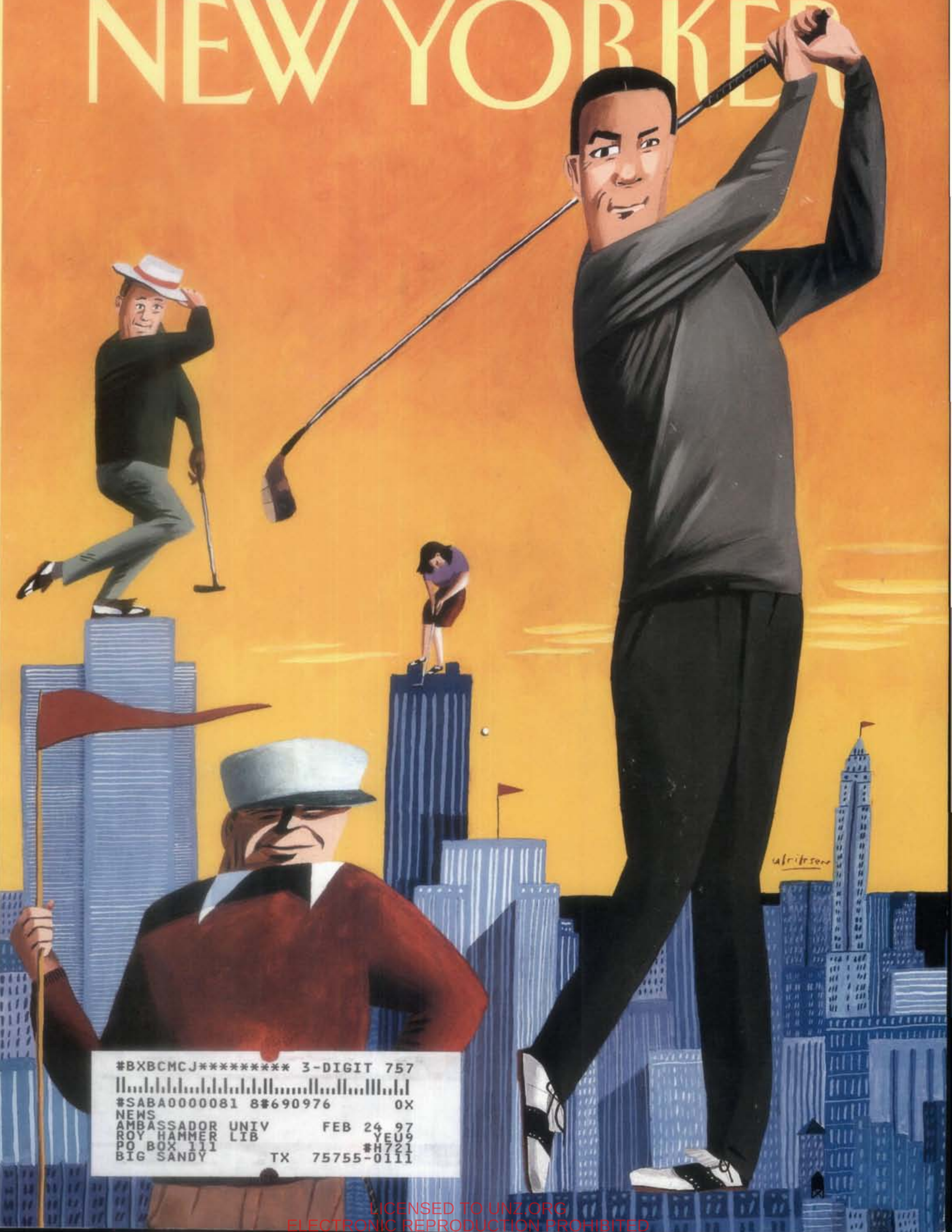

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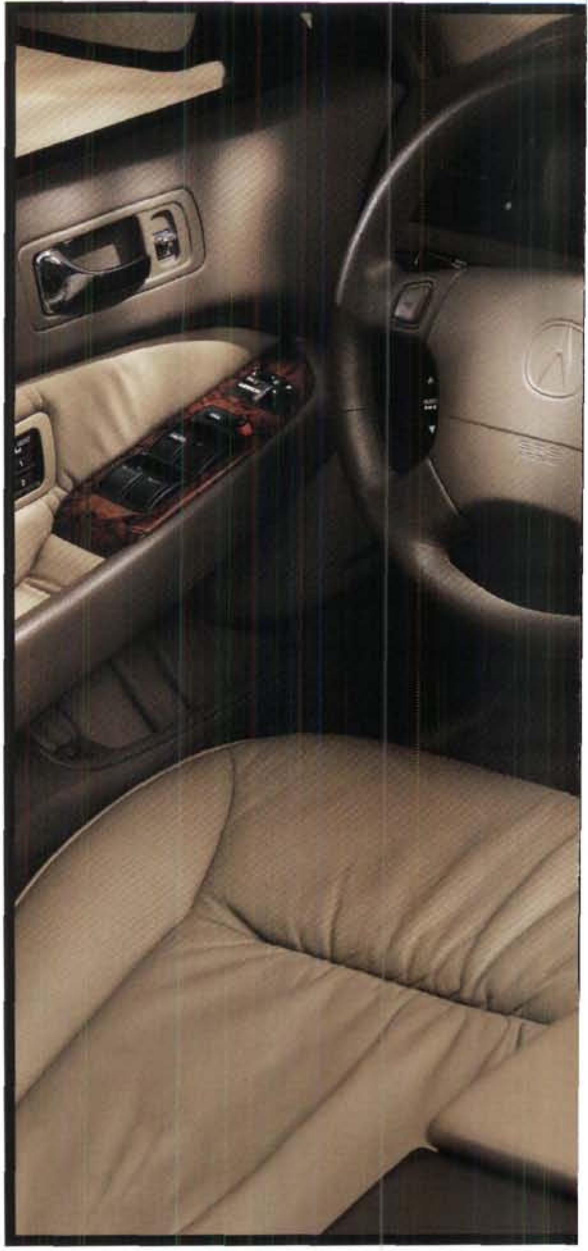

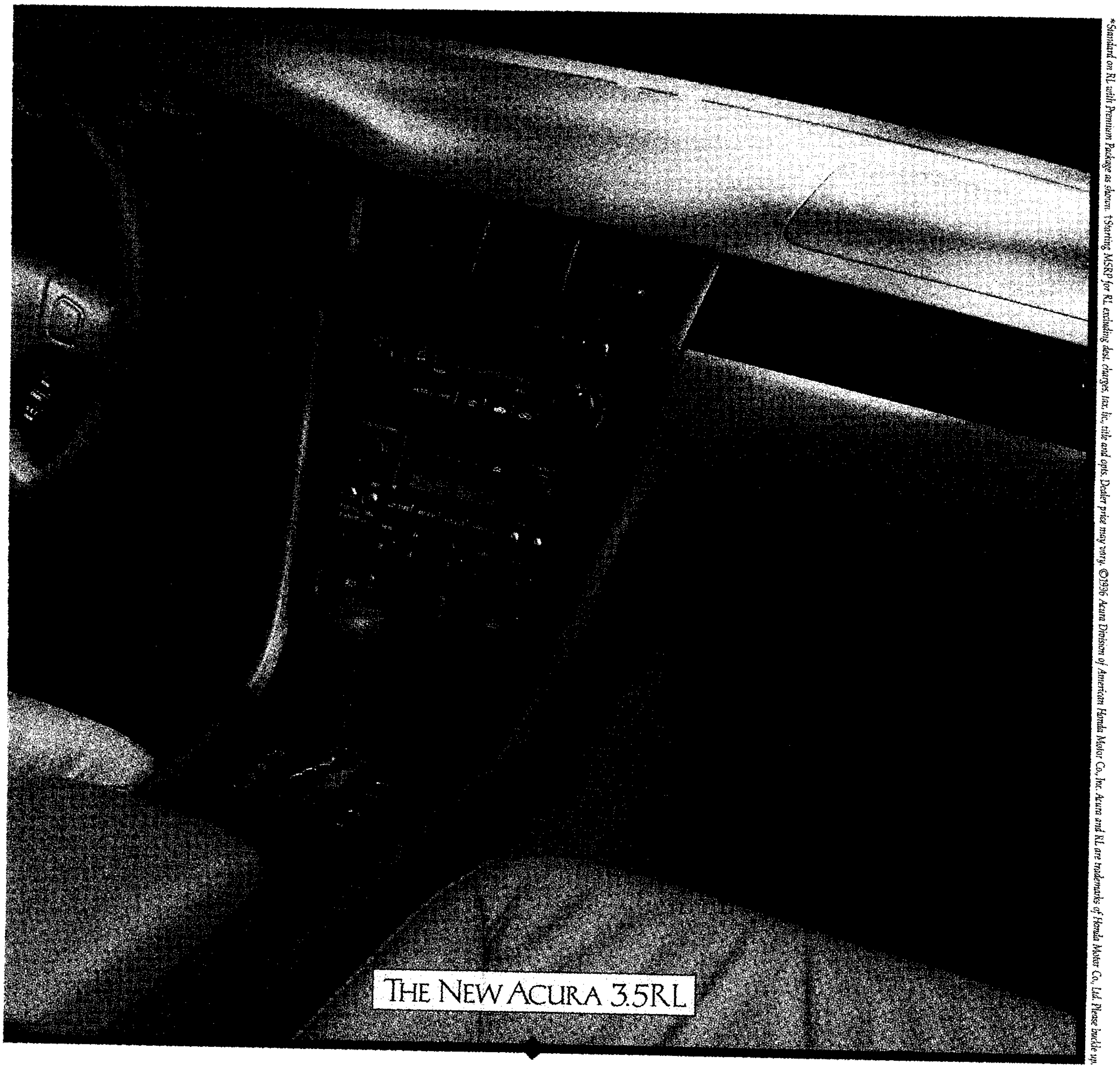

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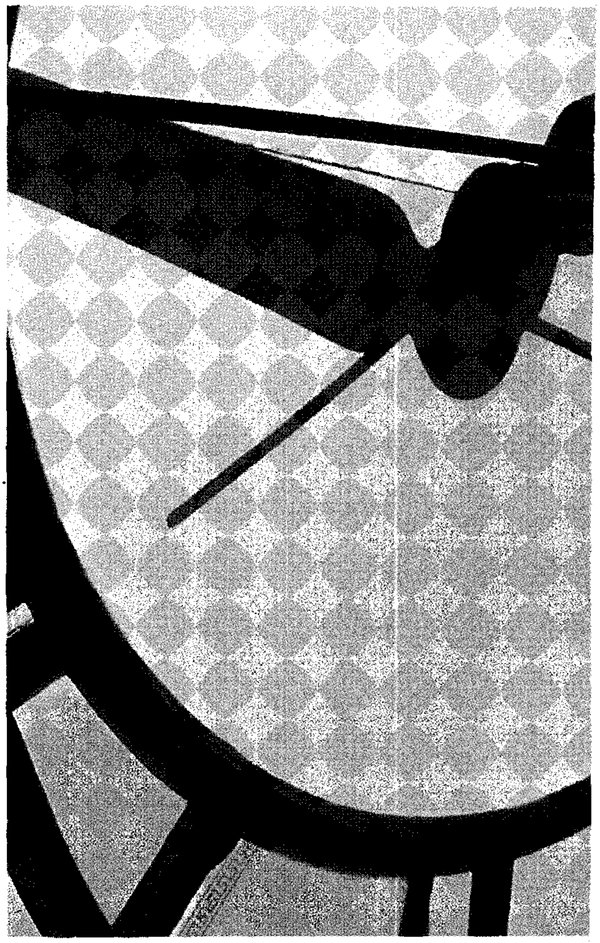

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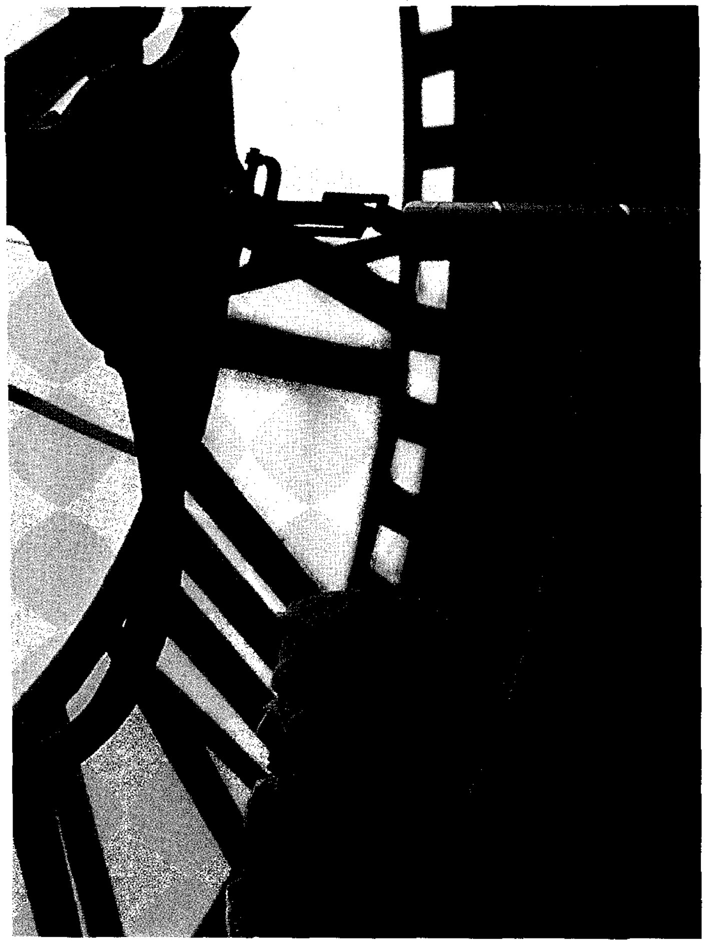

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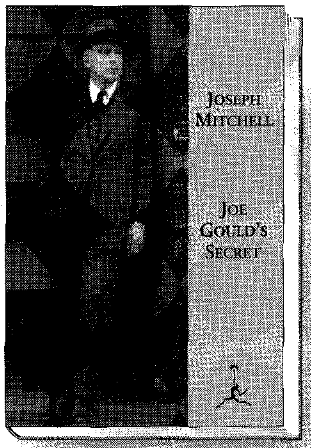

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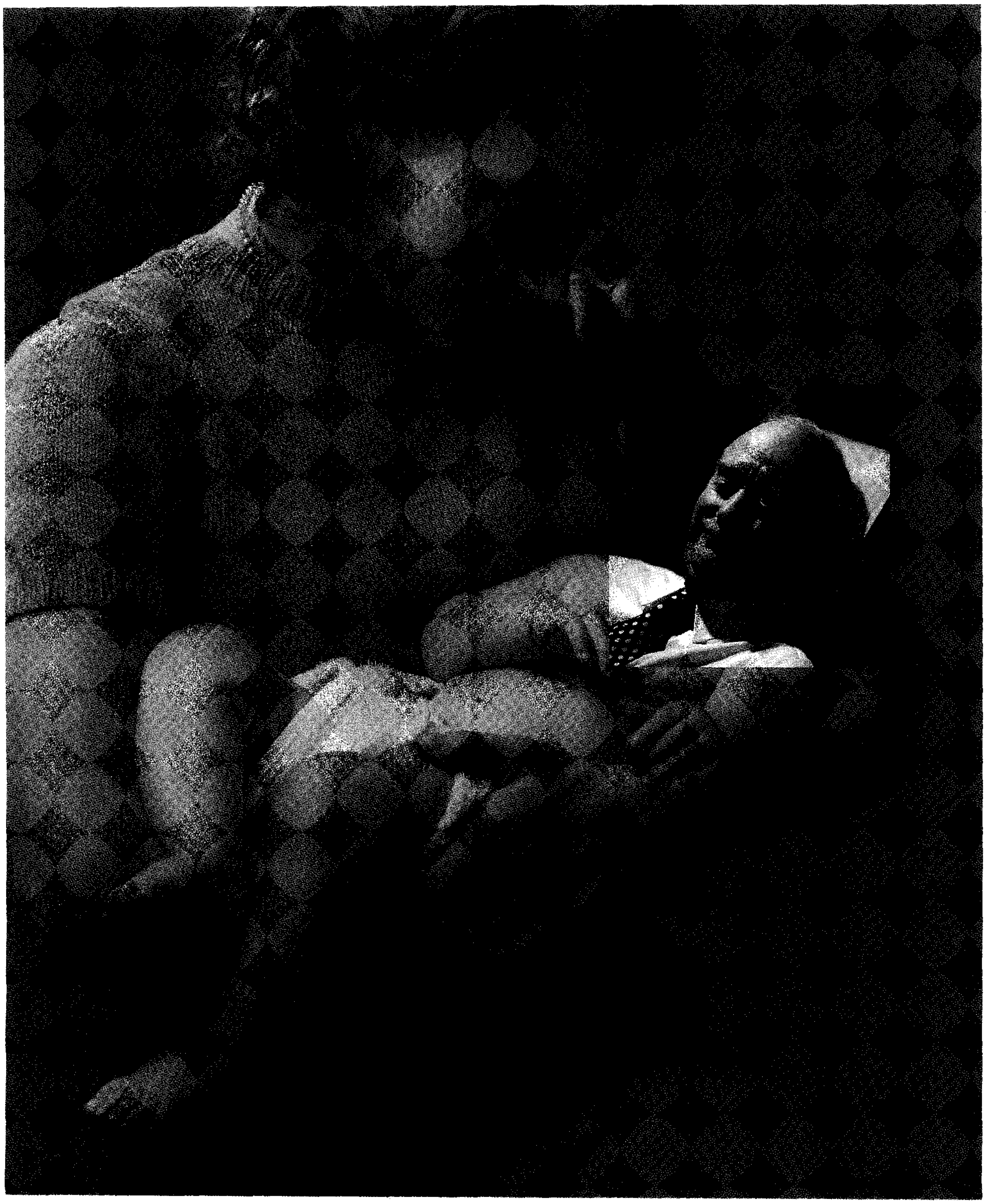

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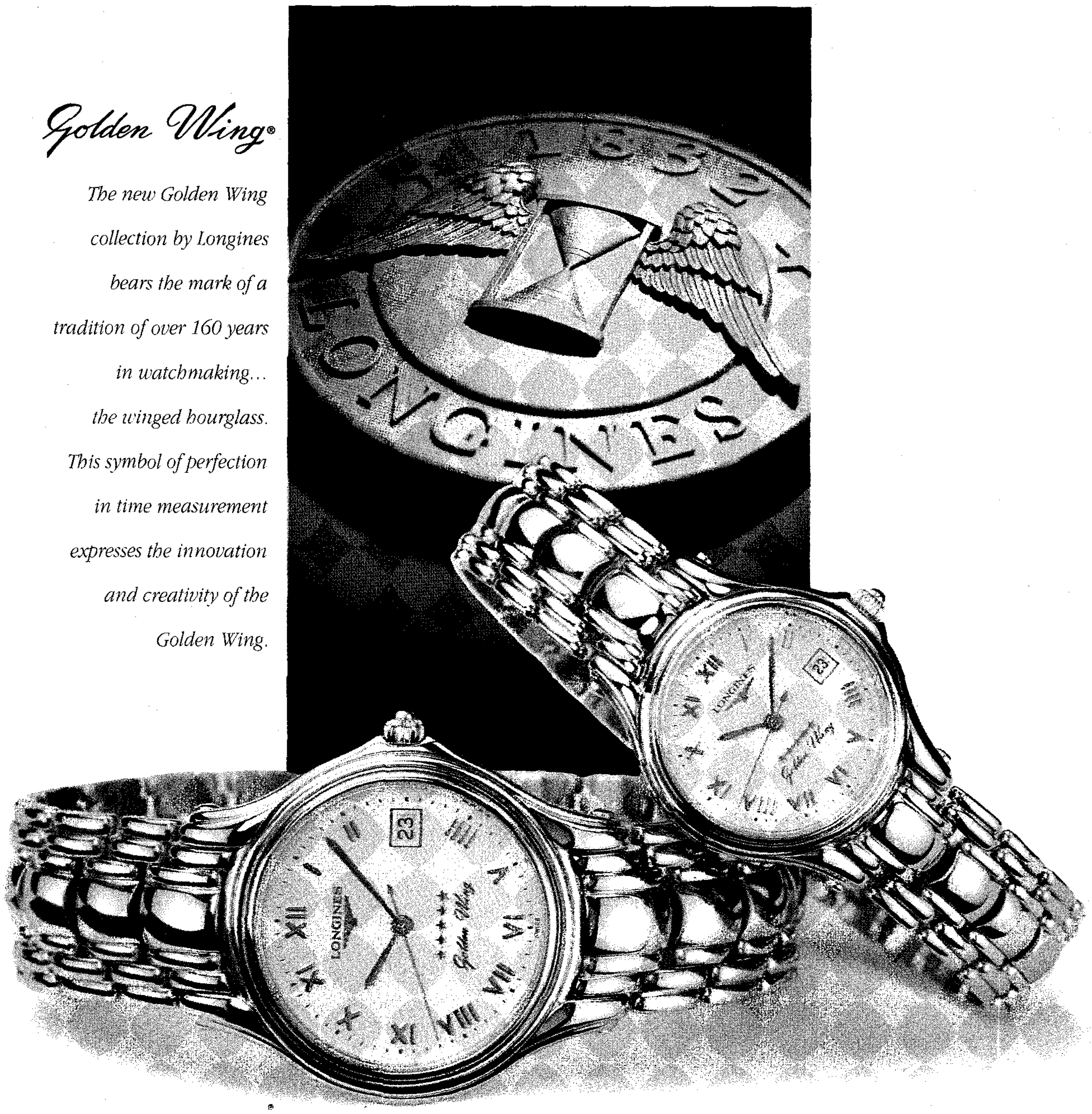

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COMMENT

ISRAEL VS. ISRAEL

Behind the squeaker, two core communities.

THE heart-stopping result of the Israeli election may prompt the thought that the Israeli public is perfectly divided against itself, a single organism with rival minds, one for "peace" and one for "security"—the nation as neurotic, torn between romance and dread. And this description does fit some Israelis—especially younger ones, whose hard swing to Shimon Peres after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, in November, and hard swing back to Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu after the bus bombings this winter gave the electorate a deceptively volatile look.

But the truth of Israeli politics is more stable and more disquieting. In the end, all that followed from Rabin's handshake with Yasir Arafat changed few minds. Israel is just about perfectly divided into two eloquent, grounded, and deeply antagonistic communities, each with its own capital, its own pedigree, and its own purchase on Jewish history and faith. When Leah Rabin, the late Prime Minister's widow, learned of Netanyahu's razor-thin victory, she said bitterly that she felt like packing her bags and leaving the country. Can Palestinians in Gaza be any more apprehensive than this about the prospect of internal exile under a Likud government?

The data tell us the following. If the electorate were made up only of Israeli Jews who lived in and around Tel Aviv, were of European (or "Ashkenazi") extraction, earned above-average salaries, had more than a high-school education, and approached religion with secularist tolerance, then Peres would have won by something like twenty or twenty-five points. On the other hand, if the electorate were made up only of Jews who lived in and around Jerusalem, were of "Sephardi" (mainly North African) origin, earned less than the average income, had no more than a high-school education, and identified with Orthodox Judaism, then Netanyahu's margin of victory would have been something like thirty or thirty-five points instead of a fraction of one per cent.

But such rough-cut voter profiles don't do justice to the integrity of the core communities beneath the divisions. People who are for the "peace process" have come to understand the term not as an endorsement of a certain foreign policy but as an elaborate ideology for a still emerging Jewish state—as a term evocative of a life to be lived in a new political economy. This is true also of the community focussed on "tightened security." The heart of the matter is an old disagreement about whether Israel is going to be a normal commercial republic or the culmination of a messianic tale, a (mostly) Jewish democratic state or a (mostly) democratic Jewish state, a home or a cause.

Labor's real achievement has been to

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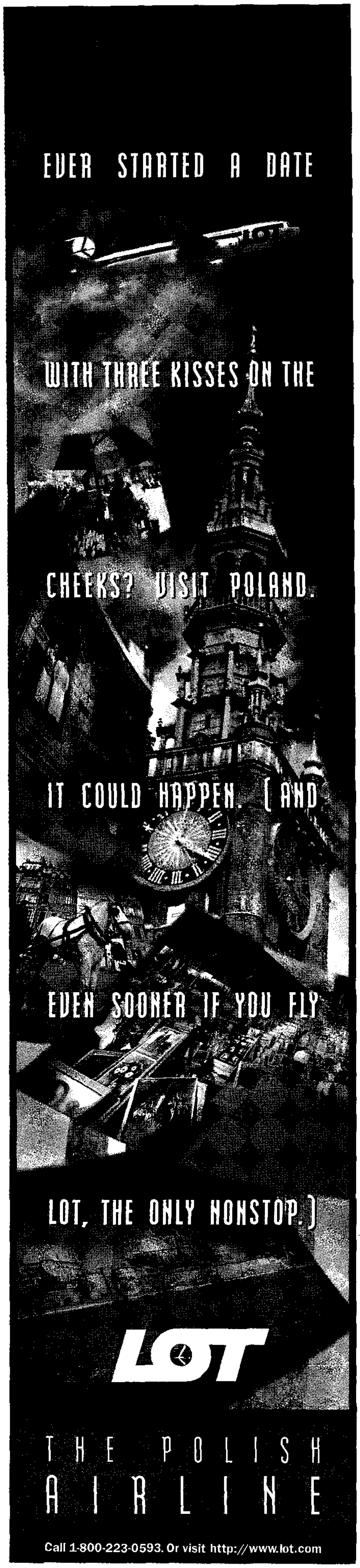


rally urbane Israelis to a vision of peace as process—a curiously consoling vision of Israelis and Arabs as tragic people, who need ways of resolving civil and national disputes non-violently. In this context, the Rabin assassination took on a Lincolnesque poignancy. Remembrances of Rabin's brutal death, of the foreign leaders who wept at his funeral, of candles lit, one by one, of his own anguished "Enough of blood and tears, enough!"—these have become part of the liturgy of Israeli democracy's civil religion. That civil religion has deep springs in what, a hundred years ago, was called "cultural Zionism"—the movement that promised Jews a way to be modern and democratic in Hebrew. Indeed, what is democracy itself if not a peace process?

Moreover, Labor and the rest of the peace community have accomplished something that the state socialists around Golda Meir in the nineteen-seventies conspicuously could not do: they have made a success of the economy. So when they speak of peace you imagine they would know what to do with it. Israel's gross domestic product has been growing at about six per cent a year and its exports of goods and services at about ten per cent, largely as a result of what has come from "Silicon Wadi"—the Tel Aviv-to-Haifa corridor. Meanwhile, unemployment has fallen to 6.3 per cent, though the country has absorbed almost seven hundred thousand Russian immigrants since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Intel is building a 1.6-billion-dollar semiconductor factory. The industrial empire of the Histadrut labor federation, Koor Industries, has been privatized. And Israeli entrepreneurs are learning about overseas markets—in Hungary and Venezuela and China—from the dozens of foreign companies that have invested in their country.

Peres was the custodian of Israel's place in the knowledge economy—a confident world of Motorola chip designers who get the morning's work-in-progress from Phoenix, Arizona, over the Internet and pass it on, with "value added," to Bangalore, India, at night. Among the people of the peace process, anchored in (or, at least, tethered to) shifting markets and cosmopolitan freedoms, a borderless economy and the new political structures consonant with it are pretty much taken for granted. Israel's three hundred top industrialists endorsed Peres a couple of weeks before the election, though the leadership of the Israel Manufacturers Association had helped found the Likud, in the seventies. A stall in the peace process, the industrialists know, would also stall Israel's integration into global markets.

The community now speaking of tightened security considers itself more authentic. Its fears are not just about today's terrorists but about something intractably terrifying in modern Jewish history, from the Inquisition (of which Netanyahu's father, Ben-Zion, is a celebrated historian) to the expulsion of Jews from Arab countries after 1948. Its ideology resonates with the old "political Zionism" of retaliation and power, a Jewish people reborn through military vigilance and righteous force, a people for whom solidarity is justified not by Hebrew but by vulnerability. No matter that the Jews stand alone. Solace comes from the certainties of Orthodoxy, even when its laws are not strictly observed, and from a defiant faith in a new, post-1967 ingathering, a scoffing at Diaspora Jews who refuse to come, and a celebration of a reclaimed Jerusalem—that sublime incubator of certainties, never to be divided again. The heroes of this community are the settlers of "Judea and Samaria," whose sacrifices secure Jerusalem's hinterland; its villains are liberals too weak or too naïve to face up to the world's hardness.

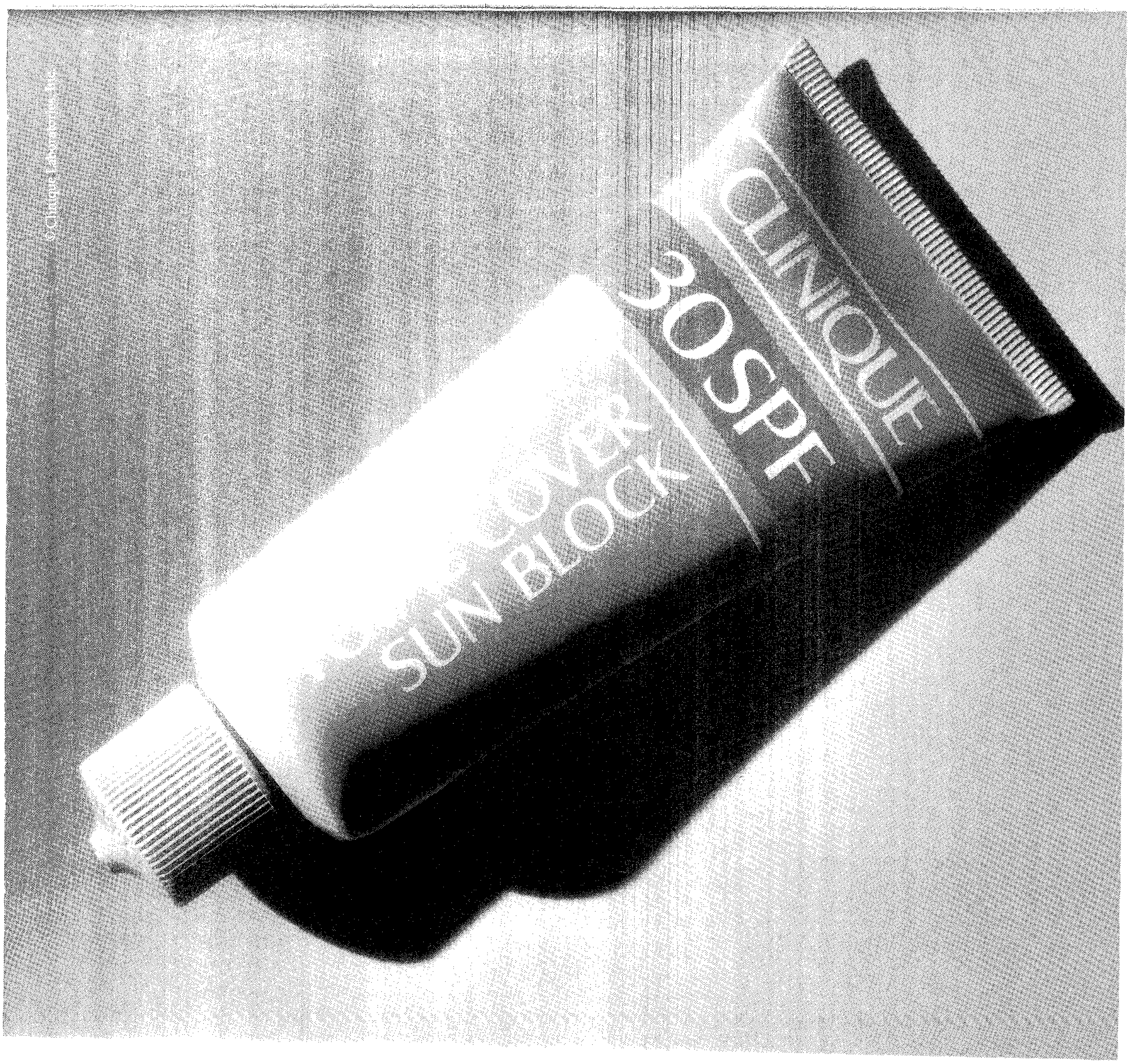
Netanyahu's people are not quite thriving in the new economy: while their boats are raised by the rising tide, they themselves are not getting rich. Though Likud's economic policies are, in principle, no different from Labor's, many of Likud's supporters may imagine doing better under a return to the hard line: better under a command-economy that is commanded to "thicken" West Bank settlement, better in a world where Arab labor is sealed out and yeshivas are automatically funded. In any case, they feel, the global economy is full of "materialist" seductions that can only corrupt the national project. The nation can never be normal, because it has to give history meaning.

The great irony, of course, is that when you trouble to look at the demography underlying the ideology, you could hardly find a better candidate for the "peace" camp than Netanyahu himself—a Western Jew by instinct and bearing, a graduate of M.I.T.'s Sloan School, a modern politician steeped in American democracy. It may not be too much to hope that he will come to recognize that scuttling the Oslo accords—by repudiating withdrawal from Hebron, say—would present dangers to Israel's economy and diplomacy many times as great as any gains to Israeli security from renewed settlement and occupation.

Still, politicians who come to power democratically are not necessarily democrats, and business thinkers who grasp the virtues of economic freedom do not necessarily create conditions for it. This is worth saying, if only for the sake of those Israelis who, having touched and handled democratic peace, are suddenly shocked to find it once again beyond their grasp.

—BERNARD AVISHAI

"I should be more like Sharon Stone? You should be more like Sharon Stone!"



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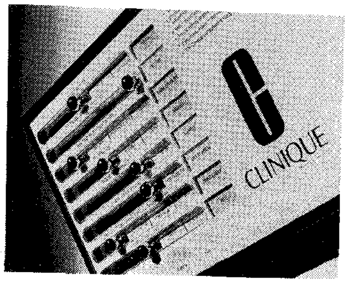

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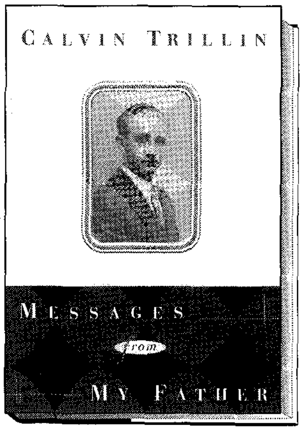

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ROARING BACK

I was interested to find myself included in the list of "chick" writers provided by James Wolcott in his recent article about the *Times* columnist Maureen Dowd ("Hear Me Purr," May 20th). Chicks, Wolcott tells us, are females who "cling to and fluff up an image of themselves that seems flirty and confrontational at the same time" and who fail to "attack issues with the contentious spirit and idea-crunching machinery" of "grownup female opinion writers." For the most part, Wolcott's diatribe is rather sweet—I remember boys like him at college, leaping out at you in hallways and warning you that wearing makeup was oppressing you. Still, when he wags his finger at Dowd, saying that she "can't be said to have carried on the cause of sisterhood," and that her work "lacks any sense of social dimension," he begins to grate a little. Must all women writers fret over late-term abortion? When was the last time Calvin Trillin got really heated up in print about prostate cancer? Where will it all end: "This week, Wolcott demands to know why Cindy Adams can't write more like Simone de Beauvoir"? What is Wolcott doing prescribing a woman writer's place, anyway? Would he feel as comfortable berating a bunch of African-American writers for insufficient gravitas? And, if so, would he style that misdemeanor "minstrel-lit"?

There's no doubt that newspapers and magazines tend to deploy women writers as light relief. One reason for this is a residual sexism that makes it more comfortable for a male editor to ask a woman writer, rather than her male colleague, for some personal "color." Another reason, I suspect, is that women tend to be more at ease with writing honestly about themselves. And light, personality-based writing of this sort has doubtless diverted some talented women from the more serious work of which they are capable. But such diversions are a well-documented hazard for journalists of both sexes. (See Cyril Connolly.) The much graver threat posed to women writers is having their work dumped in the ghetto of "a woman's point of view." If a writer is weighed down with the ludicrous task of expressing representative female thoughts, it's little wonder that her personal style becomes a shtick.

Interestingly, Wolcott has no objections to the notion of a special girls' corner on the *Times* Op-Ed page. (He writes of Anna Quindlen's departure as having opened up "a spot" for "another female voice," as if "female voice" were as specialized a job as, say, "Middle Eastern-affairs expert.") What bugs Wolcott about Dowd is not that she writes about herself, or "as a woman," but that she doesn't write as the kind of woman he approves of. She comes off as a "cool insider." She doesn't "threaten" men. But Wolcott's expectations are no less restrictive than the more conventional insistence that women writers be men-friendly. Either way, the woman writer is instructed to shape her ideas and trim her style in relation to some notional set of male expectations.

Wolcott assumes that the unpredictability of "chick" opinions—the fact that Dowd mocks George Bush *and* Bill Clinton—is a cutesy caprice or a cynical contrarian routine. But might it not be an indication of good faith, a sign of these writers' determination to call it as they see it, regardless of the current party line? I had the idea that that was what good journalism was all about. Silly old kittenish me!

ZOE HELLER
Los Angeles, Calif.

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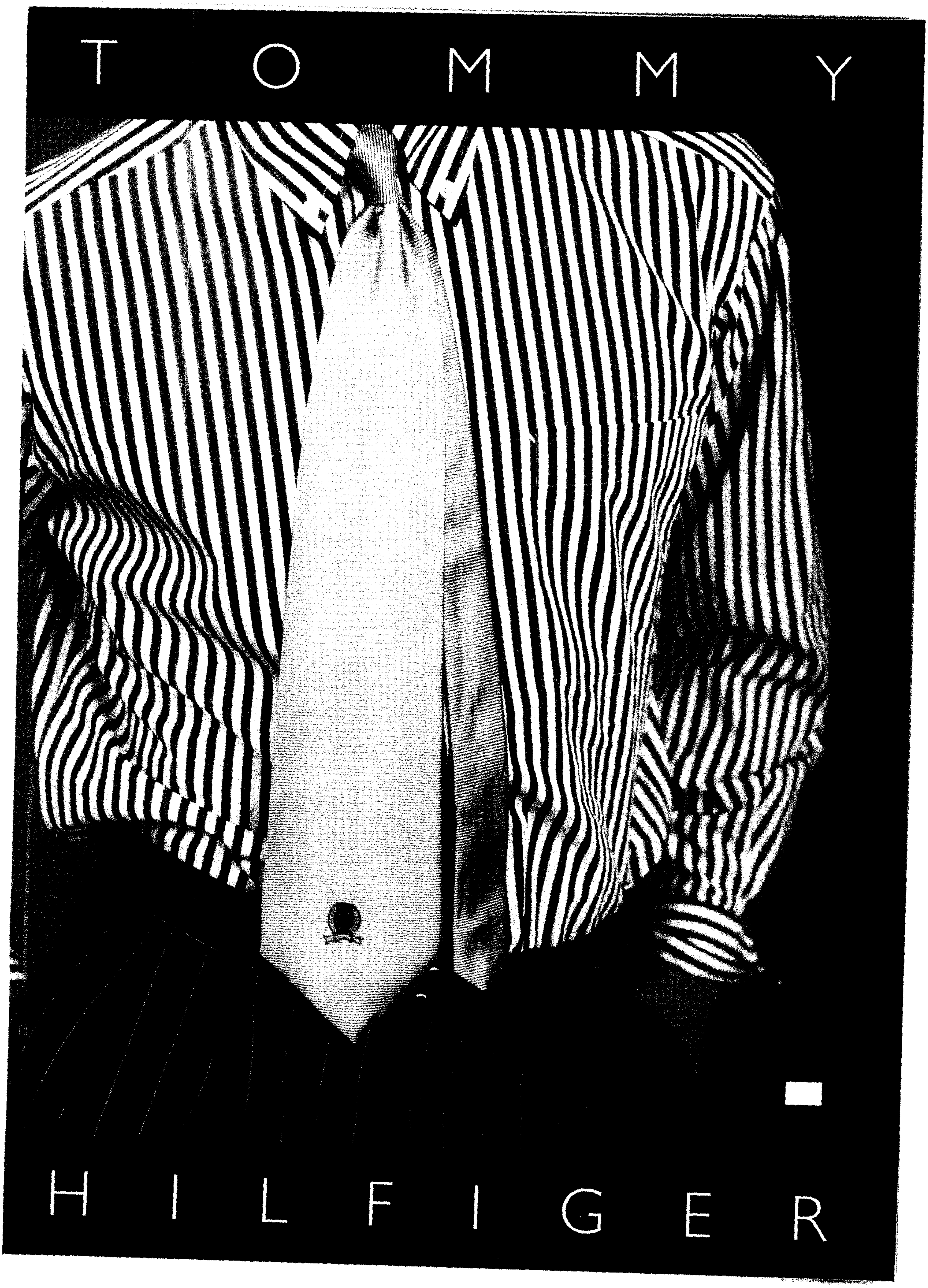
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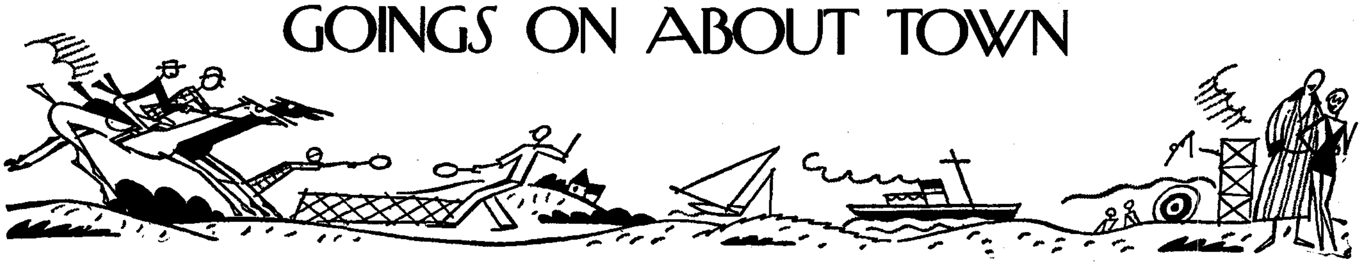

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(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Always Together—The Romanian-born playwright Anca Visdei's semiautobiographical drama, about two sisters separated by the Iron Curtain, gets an encore production by the Ubu Repertory Theatre. Opens June 11 at 8 and runs through June 23. (15 W. 28th St. 679-7562.)

The Boys in the Band—A revival of Mart Crowley's 1968 play, about a birthday party attended by a group of gay men. In previews. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Ensemble Studio Theatre—The final series in this year's six-week marathon of one-acts continues through June 16 with Joyce Carol Oates's "The Adoption," Laura Cahill's "Home," Greg Germann's "The Observatory," and Paul Selig's "Slide Show." (549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405.)

Good—C. P. Taylor's 1981 play about a man seduced by Nazism. Previews June 7-8. Opens June 9 at 7 and continues through June 30. (One Dream, 232 West Broadway. 252-2511.)

Making Porn—Rex Chandler has the role of the straight star Jack Hawk in Ronnie Larsen's play about the gay-porn business. In previews. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200.)

La Mama—June 6-8 at 8 and June 9 at 3:30 and 8: "The Wild," a new music-theatre work by composer Andy Teirstein, loosely based on "Robinson Crusoe." Through June 16. . . . ¶ June 7-8 at 10: "The Ballad of June Cool," a noirish one-woman melodrama starring Laura Kenyon as a fifties jazz singer. Directed by Thommie Walsh. Through June 29. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

A Park in Our House—The New York Theatre Workshop presents a new drama by Nilo Cruz, set in Cuba in the seventies, in which a family opens its door to a seductive Russian émigré. Preview on June 5. Opens June 6 at 8. (79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

P.S. 122—June 7-8 at 8: "Crash Test Comedy," two evenings of jocular performance art by Deb Margolin, Idris Mignott, Mo Angelos and Peg Healey, Basil Twist, James Godwin, and others. . . . ¶ June 11-12 at 8: "Interviewing the Audience," a Q. & A. with Spalding Gray. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

The Shawl—Cynthia Ozick's new drama, about two Holocaust survivors and a charismatic revisionist historian, stars Dianne Wiest, Boyd Gains, and Wendy Makkena and is directed by Sidney Lumet. Previews begin June 11. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

So . . . It's Come to This—Emmett Foster recounts the highs and lows of his twenty-year tenure as the late Joseph Papp's personal assistant. June 7-8 at 10:30. Continues through June 26. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

Tokyo Can Can—A musical set in Tokyo shortly after the Second World War, written and directed by Yutaka Okada. In previews. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Ancient History—The fateful, bittersweet arbitrariness of relationships is the rock-hard streambed under the babbling brooks of David Ives's plays; in this one, Ruth and Jack (Vivienne Benesch and Michael Rupert), a thirtysomething couple who are, as they put it, "tall, thin, and funny," show that two people who are too clever by half are likely to end up divided. The superficial point of conflict is that he is Catholic and she is Jewish, but Ives seems to be asking a much larger, more unsettling question about love: Doesn't anybody here know how to play this game? Unfortunately, the twosome is tedious, and the play, unlike the relationship, goes on forever. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes June 23.)

Arts and Leisure—A new satire, about a drama critic in crisis, by Steve Tesich. Directed by JoAnne Akalaitis. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes June 9.)

Baal—The Independent Theatre Company presents an energetic staging of Brecht's first play, with new music by Paul Todaro, who also stars. The drama is more broadly cruel and crude than Brecht's later work, and the philosophy far less clear. This production is somewhat unfocussed, too—for instance, it seems to be set in the nineteen-fifties, but for no apparent reason except that the period fits Mr. Todaro's rather menacing guitar music. Still, he is very engaging, and the rest of the cast is strong. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes June 22.)

Big—The *other* new musical not nominated for a Tony. This adaptation of the movie that starred Tom Hanks and Elizabeth Perkins provides little joy, though Daniel Jenkins, as the twelve-year-old in a grownup's body, is sweet and likable. The dance numbers are full of grimly talented, grinning kiddies—it's like a midget minstrel show—and the trouble doesn't end there: Richard Maltby, Jr., and David Shire's score is melodically challenged, and John Weidman's patronizing book has lost all the movie's charm and poignancy. Directed by Mike Ockrent. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/27/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Bring In da Noise, Bring In da Funk—Director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover's heroically energetic African-American musical. (5/20/96) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Buried Child—This production of Sam Shepard's 1978 play, directed by Gary Sinise, comes by way of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre. It takes place in the heartland, in the middle of the desiccated wasteland that America has become. Set in the filthy living room of a family with a horrible secret, the play forces you to look—for three long hours—at the ugly facts of family life, but in a big Broadway house what you see is ugliness as spectacle, and this distance dilutes the play's power. Sinise has brought the laughs to the forefront—and James Gammon, who plays the patriarch (for lack of a better word) of this rancid clan, is terrifically funny—but when the laughs aren't there you feel as though you were in a theatrical Dust Bowl, waiting for the irritating, monotonous wind to stop. (5/27/96) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

By the Sea, by the Sea, by the Beautiful Sea—Manhattan Theatre Club wraps up the season with an evening of one-acts by Terrence McNally, Joe Pintauro, and Lanford Wilson. With Lee Brock, Tim Carhart, and Mary Beth Fisher. Leonard Foglia is the director. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes June 30.)

The Cocoanuts—The 1925 musical that starred the Marx Brothers (and became their first movie). Irving Berlin's songs, charmingly sung, are ageless, but George S. Kaufman's book isn't—particularly under the unfocussed direction of Richard Sabellico. The superb cast deserves better. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes June 23.)

Cowgirls—By the end of this appealing, if somewhat predictable, musical comedy, three chamber musicians have been transformed into fringe-wearin', honky-tonkin' cowgirls. Mary Murfitt, the show's composer and lyricist, is hilarious as an uptight violinist learning how to shake it. Betsy Howie, who wrote the book, is also in the fine cast. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

DANIEL MAJA

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IN
FORUM

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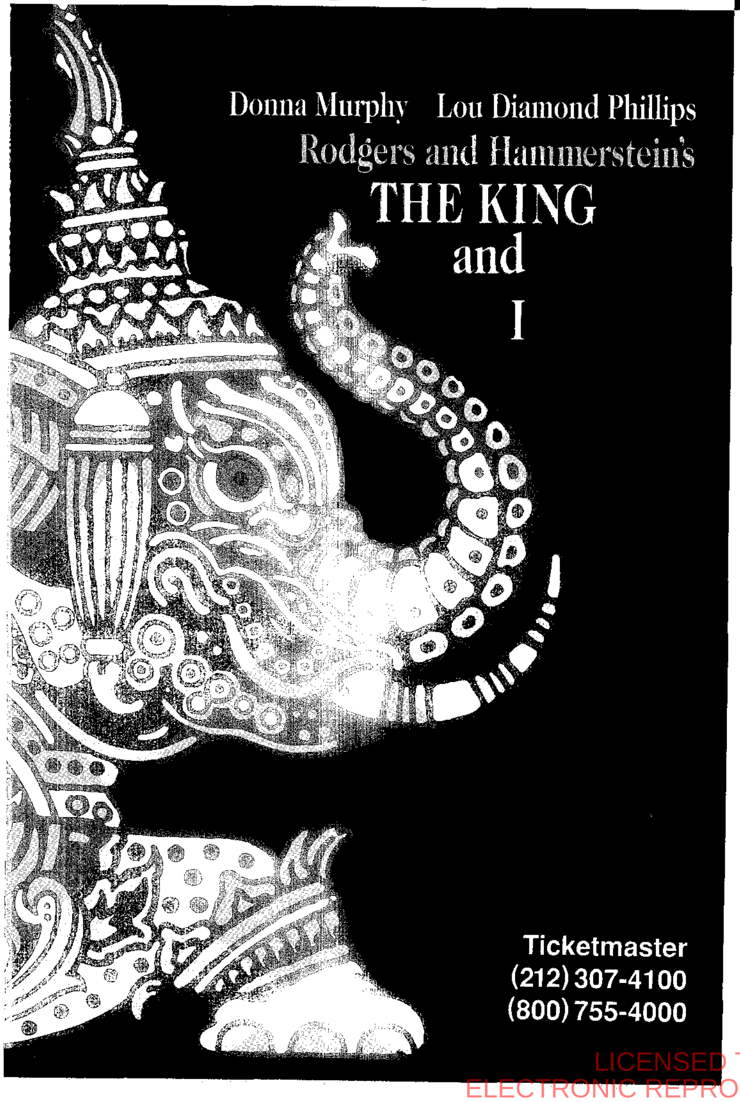

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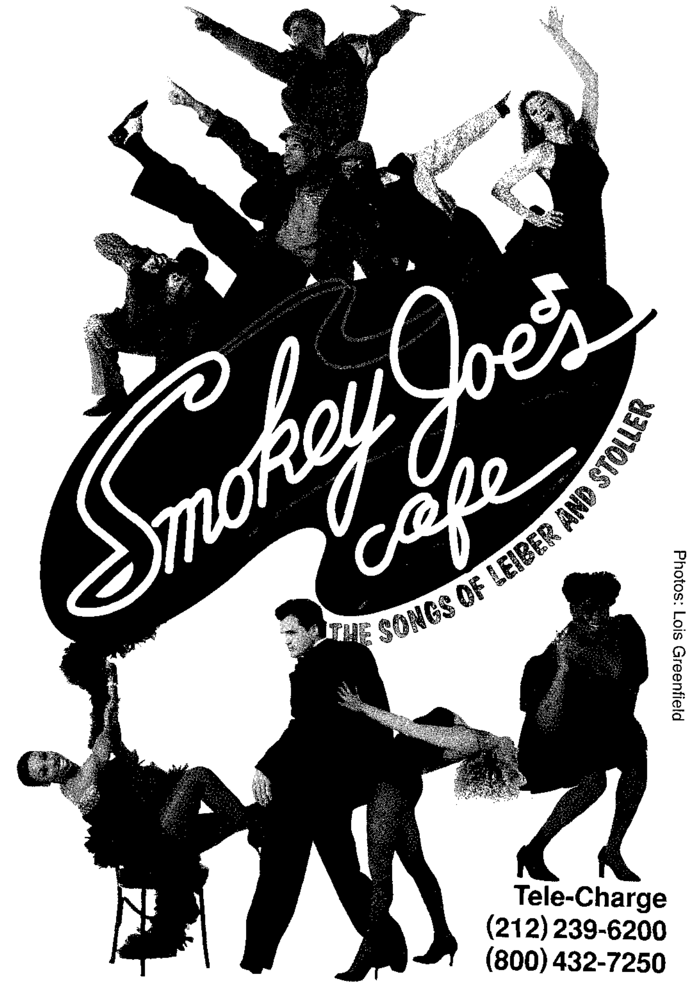

Smokey Joe's cafe
THE SONGS OF LEIBER AND STOLLER

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Curtains—Stephen Bill's 1987 dark comedy about aging, directed by Scott Elliott, has moved to the John Houseman Theatre. A New Group production.(Reviewed in this issue.) (450 W. 42nd St. 339-6200.)

Dark Rapture—Eric Overmyer's noirissimo play about a crooked screenwriter (Scott Glenn) drags you from one apocalyptic location to another—fiery Northern California, rainy Seattle, steamy Mexico, Key West (also steamy), New Orleans (yup, steamy). The snappy, snarly dialogue is a feast for the ears, but Overmyer doesn't know when to stop piling on the conspiracy theories, and the sizzle eventually ends in a fizzle. Though Marisa Tomei is not quite believable as a scheming, cheating movie producer, several of the other actors are startlingly good, especially Dan Moran, who plays both a man of mysterious identity and a Turkish used-car salesman. Scott Ellis directed. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes June 16.)

A Delicate Balance—Decorous suburban ennui is transformed into real angst in this bracing, astringent revival of Edward Albee's 1966 play about a family that has sacrificed much of its humanity for the sake of appearances. The cast, under the fine direction of Gerald Gutierrez, is uniformly excellent. Rosemary Harris and Elaine Stritch, as sisters whose only shared trait is an ability to get under each other's skin, are marvellous foils for each other—one with a cool, deadly elegance, the other all gritty, pretension-puncturing directness. As Harris's husband, who eventually sees the emptiness where the moral center of their lives should be, George Grizzard goes quite believably from blandly accommodating and sociable to unutterably lonely. Mary Beth Hurt, John Carter, and Elizabeth Wilson make up the rest of the cast. (5/27/96) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A Fair Country—A neatly packaged but hollow new play by Jon Robin Baitz, about an American diplomat in South Africa. (3/11/96) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes June 30.)

Forbidden Hollywood—Gerard Alessandrini's hit-and-miss movie-biz send-up. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum—Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbart, and Stephen Sondheim's 1962 musical-comedy version of a Roman farce is a joke play that begs for outrageousness, but Jerry Zaks's peppy, acrylic revival seldom enters that giddy zone of comic daring. As Pseudolus, the slave who connives to win his freedom, Nathan Lane proves that he's an expert comedy technician, but he's more perspiration than inspiration. A few showstopping moments do get the audience pretty high, but ultimately the show's unrelenting insistence on not thinking can make you feel like you're being tickled to death. (5/20/96) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

God's Country—A drama about the Washington State white-supremacist group the Order, by Steven Dietz. (Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 713-5334. Closes June 9.)

An Ideal Husband—In Oscar Wilde's hundred-and-one-year-old play, a youthful transgression comes back to threaten the career of a promising Cabinet member who is a potential Prime Minister. The man who saves the day is an apparent good-for-nothing, who, of course, turns out to be good for everything; he is played, with showy aplomb, by Martin Shaw. The play, which originally ran concurrently with "The Importance of Being Earnest," is as serious as it is frisky—it pulls the rug out from under conventional morality to find a deeper, more humane morality underneath. The rest of the delightful, mostly British cast, under the direction of Peter Hall, is well up to the Wildean wit and wisdom, and the evening flies by in a flash of epigrammatic splendor. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The King and I—In a word, magnificent. Hats off to Donna Murphy, as Anna, Lou Diamond Phillips, as the King of Siam, and everyone else (including Rodgers and Hammerstein, of course) who had a hand in this production. Christopher Renshaw directed. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Love Thy Neighbor—In his latest two-hour monologue, Jackie Mason prowls the stage like a rabid penguin, parcelling out tough love with equal-opportunity glee. His range may be limited, but his timing is perfect, and the house rocks with laughter. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Lovers—Brian Friel's 1968 play, directed by Nye Heron and Brian Doyle. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318. Closes June 9.)

Dianne Wiest, in Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl."

Nice Chair—A magazine researcher is sent to investigate a spiritual community devoted to silence, in a play by Susan Bernfield. Presented by the New Georges Theatre. (46 Walker St. 560-7387. Closes June 9.)

One Hour Without Television—In Jaime Salom's comedy, a couple celebrating their anniversary turn off the TV set and end up thrashing out their relationship. Performances are in English Wednesdays through Fridays and in Spanish Saturdays and Sundays. (Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 354-1293. Closes June 30.)

Orphée—Jean Cocteau Repertory celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with Cocteau's 1926 adaptation of the myth. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060. Closes June 9.)

Papa—In John deGroot's one-man play, the fine, energetic actor Len Cariou gives a valiantly gruff portrayal of Ernest Hemingway, whom we encounter in the midst of a bender one day in 1959 (two years before he shot himself). But Cariou's effort to elevate his character's sad strutting and impotent anger gets sideswiped by the overloaded script, which has no surprises, way too many words, and not nearly enough fresh insights. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes June 30.)

Radio Mambo: Culture Clash Invades Miami—Springing from a series of interviews the Latino comedy troupe Culture Clash conducted with residents of Dade County, Florida, these character sketches—they include a huckster furniture salesman, an all-too-precious art dealer, and, of course, a host of transplanted New Yorkers (this *is* Miami)—don't so much build to a point as pile up in a heap. The evening is funny in some spots, dull in others, and, owing to some expendable dance numbers, longer than it ought to be. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Rent—The late Jonathan Larson's rock opera, inspired by Puccini's "La Bohème" and set in a gray and dishevelled East Village loft space, stands every assumption of the traditional musical on its head. It can't support the narrative overload (eight separate stories are told), yet by the end of the evening Larson's talent has taken the audience to places the musical never ventures these days. (2/19/96) (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.)

Seven Guitars—August Wilson's exciting new play, which flashes back to the final days of a Pittsburgh blues singer (Keith David), sends us stirring news of black life in the late forties. The seven guitars of the title are the seven memorable characters whose high times and dashed dreams Wilson turns into beautiful, complex music—a funky, wailing, irresistible Chicago blues. Lloyd Richards is the director. (4/15/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You—Christopher Durang's 1979 comedy, starring Geraldine Librandi and directed by Mark Cannistraro. Saturdays at 8, through July 6. (Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. S. 255-5438.)

State Fair—This lively, colorful stage version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1945 movie musical is a pleasure, despite some weak perfomances in key roles. Co-directed by James Hammerstein (son of) and Randy Skinner, who also did the choreography. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Tartuffe: Born Again—Alison Fraser, John Glover, and David Schramm lead the cast in Freyda Thomas's latest Molière adaptation, in which the antihero has become a televangelist. Directed by David Saint. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes June 23.)

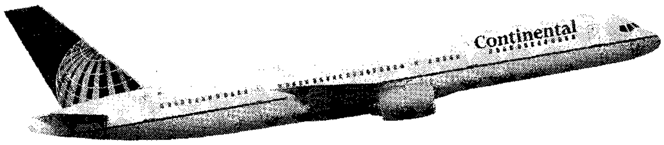
Three in the Back, Two in the Head—The title promises a lot more action than Canadian playwright Jason Sherman's thriller delivers. Most of it takes place in a series of flashbacks set in a C.I.A. office, where an agency official (Byron Jennings) gives a young professor (Ben Shenkman) the party line on how the professor's scientist father (Nick Wyman) was murdered while working on a missile-deterrent project. Political intrigue does not a thriller make, and the talented actors have little to do other than grapple with some morality-of-power issues and chew the scenery on the few occasions that Sherman's predictable script gives them the chance. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes June 22.)

Valley Song—The South African playwright Athol Fugard's latest drama, about the effects of political change in his homeland, has returned to Manhattan Theatre Club. With LisaGay Hamilton and Marius Weyers. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes June 30.)

Virgins and Other Myths—Colin Martin's one-man show—a sort of "This Gay Boy's Life." (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

We'll Meet Again—A limited engagement of Vicki Stuart's one-woman musical memoir about her childhood in England during the Second World War. Presented by the York Theatre Com-

KELYNN Z. ALDER



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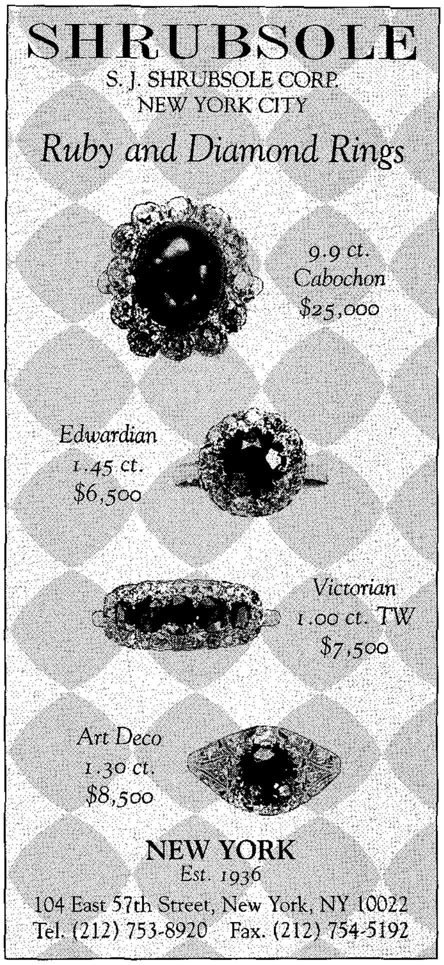
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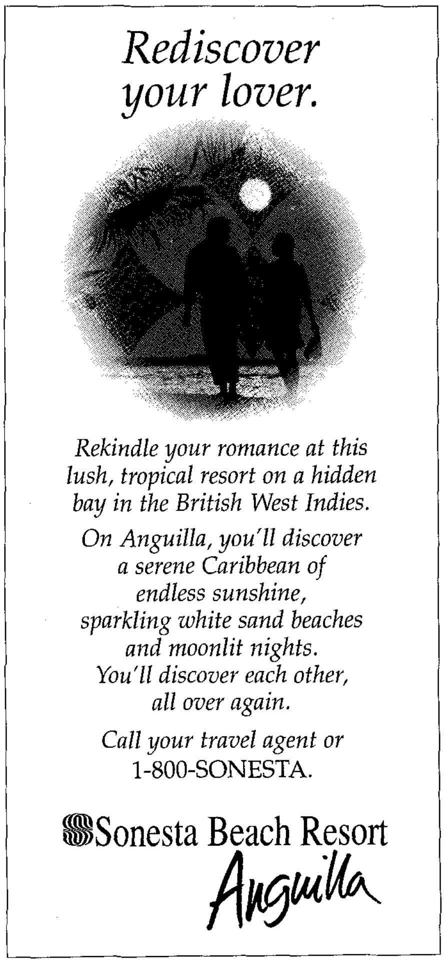
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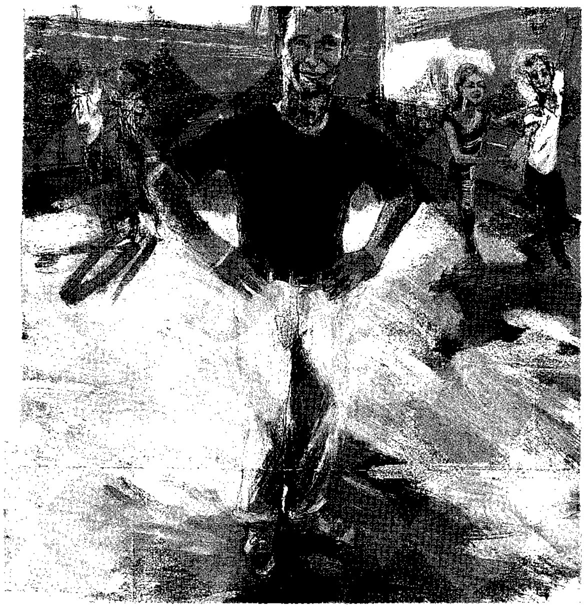
pany. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes June 30.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **THE FOOD CHAIN:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **MRS. KLEIN:** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. (Closes June 29.) . . . **MOON OVER BUFFALO:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.


Kevin O'Day rehearsing "Badchonim" with N.Y.C.B.

LYNN PAULEY

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—"Hey there, short neck!" the long-necked dancer Albert Evans calls when the choreographer Kevin O'Day enters N.Y.C.B.'s sunny rehearsal studio. O'Day is amused, but the former Tharp and A.B.T. standout can give as well as he gets: "Run like regular people," he demands of the corps a few minutes later. "You don't have to run like ballet dancers." O'Day's latest work for the company, "Badchonim," set primarily to a score based on a chamber piece ("Overture on Hebrew Themes") that Prokofiev sketched out in a single afternoon in 1919, premières June 6. His last work for the company, "Dvořák Bagatelles," showed a healthy respect for the divertissement tradition—he has called it his "pink piece." But with the new work, O'Day returns to the loose-hipped muscularity of his 1994 company début, "Viola Alone." Laying out "Badchonim," he confesses, he occasionally turned off the Prokofiev and worked instead to the cranky blues of George Thorogood and the Destroyers. "Sometimes," he says, "you have to rough it up to find the edge." . . . ¶ June 5 at 8: "Touch," "Ancient Airs and Dances," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ June 6 at 8: "Mozartiana," the première of "Badchonim," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ June 8 at 2: "Prodigal Son," "The Waltz Project," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ June 8 at 8: "Mozartiana," "Fancy Free," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ June 9 at 3: "Touch," "Fancy Free," and "Cortège Hongrois." . . . ¶ June 11 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Badchonim," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 30.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE— June 5 at 2 and 8 and June 6 at 8: "La Bayadère." . . . ¶ June 7 at 8: "Apollo," "Stepping Stones," and "A Brahms Symphony." . . . ¶ June 8 at 2: "The Leaves Are Fading," "Apollo," and "A Brahms Symphony." . . . ¶ June 8 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "The Nutcracker Pas de Deux," "Rose Adagio," and "The Sleeping Beauty, Act III." . . . ¶ June 10 at 8: "The Leaves Are Fading," "Stepping Stones," and "A Brahms Symphony." . . . ¶ June 11 at 8: "Apollo," "Stepping Stones," and "The Sleeping Beauty, Act III." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through June 22.)

LINES CONTEMPORARY BALLET—The San Francisco choreographer Alonzo King returns to the East Coast with two repertory works ("String Quartet" and "Sacred Text") and the première of "Handel Pas de Deux." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 4-7 at 8, June 8 at 2 and 8, and June 9 at 2 and 7:30.)

PERKSDANCEMUSICTHEATRE—With its string of quick-hitting numbers (a woman moving to the sound of her heartbeat, playing the light of a candle against her skin, or floating over a stage of blue fabric), the dance card for choreographer Rebecca Stenn's current engagement reads like a Brian Wilson song list: catchy, satisfying, deceptively simple. The live music, performed by Nico Abondolo and a six-piece combo, provides the kind of danceable backup that drives the action onstage and provokes little jukey movements in the audience (tap, snap, shake, and so on). A bona-fide dance *concert*. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. June 6-8 at 7:30 and June 9 at 3 and 7:30.)

SILVIA MARTINS SOLO DANCE—The onetime Mark Morris dancer, in works by Molissa Fenley, Tere O'Connor, and Doris Humphrey, among others. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. June 5-8 at 8.)

BALLETHNIC DANCE COMPANY—In 1989, emerging choreographers Waverly and Nena Gilreath Lucas, then with the Dance Theatre of Harlem, left New York for Atlanta, partly to make ballets about Africans ("We couldn't sit around and wait for someone else to do it," Waverly says), partly for less purely professional reasons ("I can look out my window in Atlanta and see trees and not have to deal with the snow thing"). On this first trip back, they have brought five bristling ballets, including "The Leopard's Tale," which in its travelling version has two parts: a pas de deux, for leopard and leopardess, about "territorial battles, viciousness, and competitiveness," and a group work in which the leopard, having survived battles with beasts and scavengers, encounters the snake. (Aaron Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 135th St. 650-7100. June 8 at 7:30 and June 9 at 3.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

"Hart & Hammerstein Centennial, Plus One"—A free concert devoted to the work of Lorenz and Oscar, featuring Mary Cleere Haran (see Rainbow & Stars), and Broadway performers Jason Graae and Ron Raines. (Castle Clinton National Monument, Battery Park. June 5 at 6:30.)

Styx / Kansas—Although the subgenre known as progressive rock was primarily an English phenomenon, Yes, Genesis, and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer being its primary exponents, the thrill of juxtaposing screechy guitars and strangled synthesizers with billowing capes and medieval iconography wasn't lost on the Yanks. Of these two American prog-rock leviathans, Styx was arguably the better, if only for its cheery castrato harmonies and its groundbreaking forays into the so-called power ballad (the most egregious example is "Babe"). Kansas had more hair and a violin player, but, following the massive success of "Carry On Wayward Son" and "Dust in the Wind," the band chose the unlikely path of spiritual redemption and became born-again Christians. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. June 5 at 8.)

ONLY CONNECT

Web Sightings

Spinn Webe (http://spinn.thoughtport.com/spinnwebe)—A window on the weird, Spinn Webe shows you the regions of the World Wide Web that your mother warned you about. From its murky home page to its popular "Dysfunctional Family Circus," where Bil Keane's wholesome cartoons get recaptioned by aspiring satirists, Spinn Webe offers a tour of the Web's root cellar. Webmeister Greg Galcik, who evaluates sites for Point.com, the Web-review service, keeps it all intimately interactive: readers respond to his "Weekly Pet Peeves" (e.g., "the way actors in musicals always raise their hands slowly at the end of a number") with suggestions for "Petty Vengeances" ("try raising your arms along with the actors"). Other found annoyances include "Those Pesky Apostrophe's," a collection of "incorrect apostrophes by people who should know better," and its sister compendium, the "You 'Gotta' Love 'Those' Quotes" page.

If all of that sounds too juvenile, consider "The Mystic 9-Ball," the strangest search engine you're likely to find: "The Mystic 9-Ball is one with the Web. . . . When asked a question, it searches the Web to find the answer." A test query, "Who's on first?," brought up, within minutes, a series of links to educational linguistics and grammar sites. "The answers lie within the discovered text," warns the 9-Ball, "and must be interpreted by one who is clear of mind." (What's on second?) The "Spinn Webe Awards" go to Galcik's choice of sites under the headings Creative, Odd, and Twisted. What's twisted in this context? Yossie's Handcuff Collection; The Little Engine That Tried—and Failed; The Exploding Heads Page. Mama told you not to come.

Dick Dale—Another American legend rescued from obscurity by Quentin Tarantino: Dale's blistering guitar work helped turn the opening credits of "Pulp Fiction" into a high-speed punch in the stomach. In the early sixties, his staccato, tremolo-ridden leads made him a founding father of surf rock, and he recorded such masterpieces of the genre as "Miserlou" and "Let's Go Trippin' " (though the high point of his career was probably his appearance with Frankie and Annette in "Muscle Beach Party"). He spent most of the seventies as a nostalgia act and a real-estate investor, but things really hit bottom in the eighties, when he went through a bitter divorce and, in a freak accident, suffered second-degree burns over much of his body, including his left hand. These days, Dale has his "Pulp" cachet, a new wife, and a new record deal. Surf's up. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. June 5 at 8.)

Hassan Hakmoun and Friends—Hakmoun hails from Morocco, but he's been living in New York for the past few years, and the experience has enriched his music in unusual ways—at times he sounds more like Brooklyn than Marrakech. Expect a huge churning sound: North African rhythms, Western melodies, raga, and his soaring, otherworldly voice. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. June 7 at 8.)

Bob Seger—Seger has been singing about the blue-collar life (and the Vietnam War, among other unpopular topics) since the late sixties. Although his latest album, "It's a Mystery," hasn't yielded any hits, his workingman material still resonates for some folks, and in concert he remains the lionhearted warrior he's always been for them. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. June 8 at 8.)

Dave Matthews Band—Even before their multi-platinum début, this Charlottesville quintet—imagine Peter Gabriel crossed with Hootie and the Blowfish—had become the pride of our nation's undergraduates. Now, as the band's new release, "Crash," dodges the sophomore jinx, the kids don't seem to mind that their humble heroes have become full-fledged rock stars. They still pack every show, sing along with every song, and purchase Dave screen savers for their laptops. And, like the band they worship, they still ignore everything the Alternative Nation says is cool. With Ben Harper, who interprets soul for the Birkenstock set. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 9 at 8.)

Betty Buckley—Broadway's current incarnation of Norma Desmond leaves the cavernous stage of "Sunset Boulevard" for one night at this audiophile's paradise. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 10 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **susannah mc corkle,** here through late June, should feel at home in this upscale aerie: both she and the hotel know how to be sophisticated without making a big deal about it. Literate and knowledgeable about the history of her art, she takes her audience on a jazz-inflected stroll through the past seventy years of American popular song, stopping this time to breathe in the rarefied atmosphere of Cole Porter. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A double bill featuring the **larry coryell** quartet and the **mark whitfield** quartet has the stage from June 11. It's funny to think of the perennially youthful Coryell as an older-generation jazz guitarist, but next to the twentysomething Whitfield, he most certainly is. No matter how far he strays, Coryell's roots keep him honest; Whitfield is still learning that what he *doesn't* play can be a jazzman's best friend. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Through June 8: Back in the late fifties, a trio comprised of pianist **mike le donne,** bassist **peter washington,** and drummer **louis hayes** would have been able to

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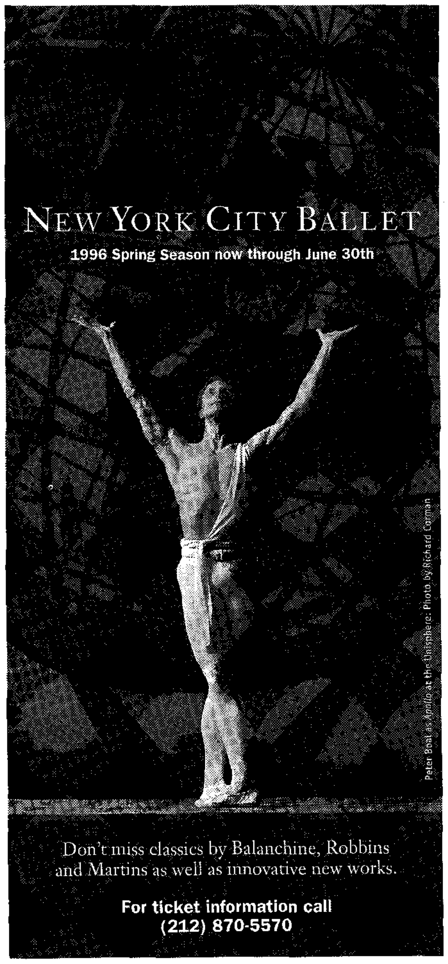

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Peter Boal as Apollo at the Unisphere. Photo by Richard Corman

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name their own price. Hayes, a maniacally swinging player who cut his teeth with Cannonball Adderley, may be the only one of the three who can actually remember the glory days, but his younger bandmates are so genuinely steeped in hard bop that he should expect severe déjà vu. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—After twenty-nine years at the Café Carlyle, BOBBY SHORT is polished to such a high gloss that he's almost blinding to behold. Everything he does is breathlessly paced: tempos accelerate, notes ascend, hands clap, teeth flash. His speech has the arcane ring that comes from travelling in glamorous circles: "You're a knockout!" "What an audience!" "How chic!" "Wow!" Just as your attention begins to flag, he shifts gears and does ten minutes of blues with cheeky conviction. But all his mannerisms really come into focus the minute he sings Cole Porter, which turns everything else into a warmup. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, BARBARA CARROLL is in attendance.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through June 9: the CHARLES LLOYD quintet. Every hippie's favorite tenor saxophonist has unfortunately failed to maintain the crossover audience he cultivated during the sixties. He's still guilty of some head-in-the-clouds posturing, but when he comes down to earth he can be entrancing. With pianist Michel Petrucciani. Postmodern guitar god BILL FRISELL drops by with a quartet on June 11. His latest recording, "Quartet," is an atmospheric chamber work so delicate that all drums have been banished. Whether he can re-create this mood in an uptown jazz room is anyone's guess, but no matter what route he takes, Frisell sounds like no one else: mating the tonality of rock with the classic finesse and economy of a Zen master, he's taken the guitar to the next dimension. Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—June 5-8: Guitar and bass with Nat Jones and Lisle Atkinson.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The preëminent interpreter of the great American songbook, MARY CLEERE HARAN (in through late June), is an artist of almost supernatural poise. For this engagement she turns her unblinking eye to the brief but inspired musical partnership of Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields. Unlike many club singers, Haran knows the value of understatement; she uses her smile not to wow the room but to light up her songs. She also loves to talk, and some of her monologues turn into pocket essays (she may be the only singer who can work Proust and Mel Brooks into the same sentence). Closed Mondays.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through June 9: the STEVE TURRE sextet. Whether making his trombone jump through hoops or extracting melodies from his arsenal of tuned conch shells, Turre is a lusty improviser who's been a welcome presence on the bandstand since his days with Rahsaan Roland Kirk in the mid-seventies. The BLUE NOTE ALL-STARS take over on June 11. Although their recent début album, "Blue Spirits," was a bit chilly, the All-Stars are chockablock with talent: saxophonists Javon Jackson and Greg Osby, trumpeter Tim Hagans, pianist Kevin Hays, drummer Bill Stewart, and bassist Essiet Essiet have done such conspicuously mature work in the past two years that electricity seems inevitable. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—Through June 9: the ILLINOIS JACQUET big band. Now in his seventies, the tenor saxophonist is a survivor whose career high points include his famous solo on Lionel Hampton's recording of "Flying Home" and his screeching, stomping tenor battles in the fifties, as a member of Jazz at the Philharmonic. In 1983, he decided to put together a big band, and it has become a smooth, highly popular Basie-like combo, easy to dance to and most notable for its leader's sumptuous sound. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—ROY HARGROVE (in with a quintet through June 6, and a big band June 7-9) is an all-American musician. Everything about his trumpet playing conveys verve, dazzle, fun, and optimism—it's a little hard to take. He has the skill and the spirit, but a study of, say, B. B. King might calibrate his vision a bit. The JAMES CARTER quartet gets the nod starting June 11. The VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—MOSE ALLISON, who plays here with a trio June 8-11, is still making the world safe for pissed-off musical anomalies over sixty. Lyrically dismembering hypocrites is a full-time job (behind that honeyed Mississippi charm lies the mind of a killer), but he still finds the time to slip in some wonderfully eccentric piano work. Lately, Van Morrison has taken a shine to Allison's tunes, but no one can deliver irony like this Southern gentleman. Dining.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through June 8: piano, bass, and sax with JUNIOR MANCE, CALVIN HILL, and JOE TEMPERLEY. Dining.

ROCK, ETC.

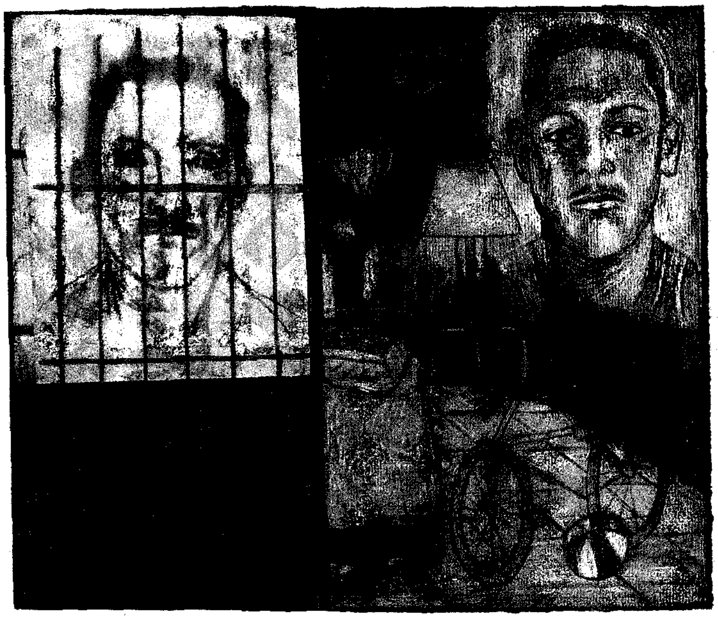
Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—June 5: BO DIDDLEY. Those pounding tom-toms, those sinewy maracas, that distorted, fuse-blowing guitar. Call it hambone, call it shave and a haircut, two bits, call it anything you want—it's still going to be the Bo Diddley beat. And once it gets you in its clutches it's impossible to shake loose. June 6: SHARON SHANNON. By mixing traditional Irish folk with rock and reggae and wearing leather jackets and hiking boots, this fleet-fingered accordionist has made quite an impression on the flourishing Celtic music scene. Her latest collection of instrumental gems is called "Out the Gap." June 11: An evening with veteran keyboardists AL KOOPER and JIMMY WEBB. Kooper's credits as a songwriter ("This Diamond Ring"), session player (organ on "Like a Rolling Stone"), bandleader (the Blues Project; Blood, Sweat and Tears), and producer (Lynyrd Skynyrd) read like a walking tour through the sixties and seventies. Webb's hit-filled catalogue includes such far-afield classics as "Up, Up and Away," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," and the gloriously inscrutable "MacArthur Park."

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—June 5: The KELLY DEAL 6000. Freshly sprung from rehab after a well-publicized heroin bust, Kelly (twin sister of Kim from the Breeders) has returned with a topnotch collection of unwieldy hooks called "Go to the Sugar Altar." Pretty good for a musician who was still a novice guitarist when she quit her day job three years ago. June 6: XANAX 25. June 11: WALT MINK.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Devoted to the music of the Windy City. BIG TIME SARAH lays it down *June 5-6.*

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—June 11: Klezmer music can bring out the goofball in some musicians; in the case of the KLEZMATICS, it happens en masse. They inject left-of-center mirth into an already mirthful music, but they also have the chops to back up their attitude, which is half downtown, half shtetl. The MINGUS BIG BAND still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 5: AIMEE MANN. Best remembered as the preternaturally blond leader of the mid-eighties combo 'Til Tuesday ("Voices Carry"), this talented songwriter has spent the past few years enduring a firsthand seminar on the perils of the music business. Passed like a hot potato from record company to record company, she has finally settled in at Geffen and released a terrific new album, "I'm with Stupid," some of which was previewed—believe it or not—on an excellent 1995 collection of music from "Melrose Place." June 7: LUNA. Led by Har-



An installation by Pepón Osorio, at Feldman.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

vard grad Dean Wareham, who drove Galaxie 500 to college-rock greatness, this New York quartet makes a dreamy kind of music that's so frankly derivative it's both disposable *and* eternal. (The touchstone here is the Velvet Underground—the band recently toured with Lou Reed.) Last year's "Penthouse" featured a nifty track called "23 Minutes in Brussels," with guest guitar work from Television's Tom Verlaine; like much of Luna's œuvre, it sounds like "Sister Ray" on Quaaludes.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—June 8: **SONNY BURGESS** and the **ROSIE FLORES** band. Although he's been eclipsed by some of his Sun Records stablemates, Sonny's "Higher" still turns up on any respectable rockabilly compilation. And the man—wafer-thin and well in control of his Fender Telecaster—continues to make the rounds when he's not tooling around with the venerable Sun Studio band. A great opportunity to see a down-home rockabilly hero up close. Flores has a voice that, like Gram Parsons', cracks in all the right places. This mean, guitar-toting San Antonio rose has long been the darling of the Austin and L.A. country circuits. Her eponymous 1987 début, which featured the classic "God May Forgive You (But I Won't)," was a keeper, and her followup, "Once More with Feeling," is none too shabby either. June 9: The **KELLY DEAL 6000** swings by from Brownies.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—June 5: **JOAN JETT.** She was just fifteen when she became a founding member of L.A.'s all-female rock band the Runaways in 1975, and it was her brutally frank songs that made the group more than just a gang of coquettes. That she and Runaways lead guitarist Lita Ford became solo stars in the eighties was one of rock's sweet success stories. And, as her 1994 album, "Pure and Simple," demonstrates, she's still one tough cookie. June 6 and June 8: **ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO.** With a pedigree that includes seventies punk (the Nuns) and eighties alternative country (Rank and File and the True Believers), this gritty singer-songwriter has long been a cult hero. His riveting new album, "With These Hands," finds him perfectly situated to get the commercial attention he deserves. June 11: **SYD STRAW.** It's been a long, strange trip since her delightful 1990 début, "Surprise." In the intervening years, this former Golden Palominos vocalist got married and divorced, and played a hippie chick in "Tales of the City." This year she returned to her true calling (with a little help from one of the world's greatest bar bands, the Skeletons) and released a glorious comeback, "War and Peace." She's one of the most underrated vocalists around, and it's been too long since she played New York.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—June 5: **BELA FLECK AND THE FLECKTONES.** The first banjo player to parlay virtuosity and matinée-idol looks into a successful recording career, Fleck is the Roy Clark of the nineties. His Flecktones have a tendency to tiptoe perilously close to jazz-fusion territory, but for the most part the band offers challenging, good-natured instrumental music. The **FUNKY METERS** (the adjective has been added for contractual reasons) swing by on June 7. Now that funk historicism is all the rage, it's a good time to praise the mighty Meters: as the New Orleans counterpart of Memphis's Booker T. and the MGs, the Meters were the backbone of Crescent City soul sound. Their hits define funk at its leanest and toughest.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—**EL VEZ,** "the Mexican Elvis," is your host on June 10. Señor Vez is far more than your run-of-the-mill Elvis impersonator: he claims to be the illegitimate man-child of the King and Charo. He sings in Spanish and wears a layered outfit that he slowly unpeels and tosses into the audience. Viva Las Vegas, indeed.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Museum Mile Festival—The eighteenth annual open house takes place on Tuesday, June 11, from 6 to 9 P.M. Fifth Avenue between 82nd and 104th Streets will be accessible to pedestrians and street performers only, and eight museums along the way will admit visitors for free.

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—After a painstaking ten-year conservation-and-restoration effort, the Gubbio Studiolo (from the palace of Duke Federigo da Montefeltro), which was dismantled in 1967, has been reinstalled. This masterful trompe-l'oeil Renaissance chamber, with intricately inlaid wood panels that give the illusion of open cupboards containing books, scientific instruments, and other objects, is one of only two known examples of such a room. Accompanying the installation is an ex-

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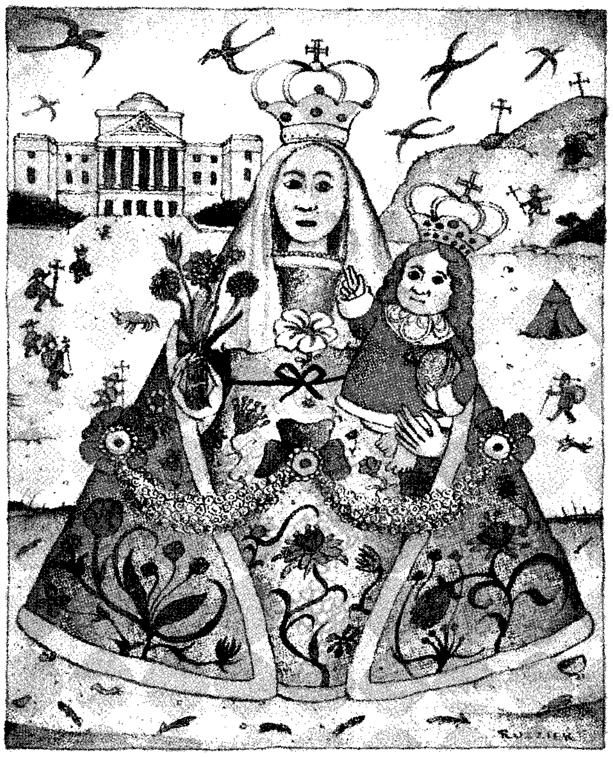
hibit covering the restoration efforts and the fifteenth-century woodworking technique of intarsia, used to create the study. . . . ¶ "Genoa: Drawings and Prints 1530-1800." The spectacular works of the Roman Baroque have always stolen the spotlight from what was going on in the sticks. This well-curated exhibition of prints and drawings from the Republic of Genoa turns up some lesser-known masters—Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, Luca Cambiaso, Bernardo Strozzi—who are by no means second-rate. Through July 7. . . . ¶ "Picturing Paradise: Colonial Photography of Samoa, 1875-1925." Through Aug. 4. . . . ¶ Sixteenth- to eighteenth-century paintings, textiles, and metalwork from the Deccan, the plateau region of south-central India, are on display in "Art of the Deccani Sultans." Through Aug. 25. . . . ¶ "Enamels of Limoges." Through June 16. . . . NOTE: The museum's roof garden is open (weather permitting), with sculptures by Rodin, Lachaise, Lipchitz, Caro, Smith (David), and Smith (Tony). (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"From Bauhaus to Pop," a selection of paintings, sculptures, drawings, and other objects that have been given to the museum over the years by the architect Philip Johnson. Starts June 6. . . . ¶ "Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation" includes a hundred and thirty paintings, and nearly as many works on paper, depicting lovers, wives, poets, art dealers, and children. Through Sept. 17. (See also Galleries—Uptown.) . . . ¶ "Come Sunday: Photographs by Thomas Roma." Through June 18. (For the run of the Picasso show, the museum's hours are Saturdays through Mondays, 9:30 to 6; Tuesdays, 11 to 6; and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30. Timed-entry tickets to Picasso are available in the lobby and through Ticketmaster, at 307-4545.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Africa: The Art of a Continent" includes more than five hundred sculptures, murals, ceremonial objects, pieces of jewelry, and textiles, culled from collections around the world. Starts June 7. . . . ¶ "In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present." The first exhibition of this scope on this topic in New York presents work by twenty-eight artists, from forties studio portraits by Salla Casset and Seydou Keita to more personal and experimental photographs from the eighties and nineties by Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé, Mody Sory Diallo, and Iké Udé. One section of the show focusses on pictures published in *Drum*, the influential magazine founded in South Africa in 1951 and subsequently published in Nigeria, Ghana, and East and Central Africa as well. Through Sept. 22. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)



"Converging Cultures," at the Brooklyn Museum.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Paul Cadmus: The Sailor Trilogy," a display of the ninety-one-year-old painter's notorious satirical suite: "Shore Leave" (1933), "The Fleet's In" (1934), and "Sailors and Floosies" (1938). Through Sept. 1. . . . ¶ "An American Story," a chronological survey of twentieth-century paintings and sculptures, both well-known and obscure, from the museum's collection. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Large-format black-and-white and color photographs documenting a hundred endangered North American plants and animals. . . . ¶ "Amber: Window to the Past." (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Converging Cultures: Art & Identity in Spanish America." An intelligently curated, wonderfully intriguing exhibition of Latin American art from the sixteenth century through the early twentieth, focussing on the interpenetrations of native and colonial cultures. Most of the three hundred often awkward but also beautiful and even noble objects—paintings, textiles, silverware, furniture, religious articles—have been gathered from the museum's collection; they attest to the uneasy yet surprisingly successful accommodation that artists in the vice-royalties of Peru and New Spain made with European styles and motifs. Through July 14. . . . ¶ "The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing: Beauty Reconfigured." Through June 9. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Worlds Within Worlds." As long ago as the Sung dynasty (960-1279), Chinese artists and scholars collected fantastically shaped rocks both for their formal beauty and as aids to inspiration; seventy choice specimens are on display. Through Aug. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"Soane: Connoisseur & Collector," fifty architectural drawings from Sir John Soane's Museum, in London, including sheets by Piranesi, Wren, William Chambers, Joseph Michael Gandy, and Robert Adam. Through July 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Being William Morris: A Centenary Exhibition," which is taken largely from the Morgan's own superb collection, presents every aspect of the Victorian artist-philosopher's career: drawings for book illustrations and stained glass, vibrant wallpaper and fabric designs, socialist manifestos, and, of course, exquisitely printed books from his Kelmscott Press, many of them in ornate, elegant bindings. Two smaller exhibits complement the main show. "Morris's Medieval Manuscripts" comprises some of the finest illuminated books from the artist's collection and "Pre-Raphaelite Drawings" includes an astonishing study by Morris and Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones for their tapestry of the goddess Flora. All three shows through Sept. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museo del Barrio, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—Alicia D'Amico, Mario Cravo Neto, Luis Gonzalez Palma, and Flor Garduño are among the artists in "Image and Memory: Latin American Photography, 1880-1992." Through June 16. . . . ¶ "The Catherwood Project" and "Project for the Day You'll Love Me," two installations by the writer and filmmaker Leandro Katz. Through June 16. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"The Art of the Contemporary Doll" features examples in all sorts of mediums by such artists as Jane Cather, Nancy Wiley, Akira Blount, and Lawan Angelique. . . . ¶ Antique and contemporary quilts from the museum's collection, representing all of the major quilt-making traditions, are on view in a show called "An American Treasury." (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Gregory Gillespie—What a weird, unsettling vision this artist has. Naïve art-historical references, encompassing everything from Arcimboldo to Keith Haring, run riot in these new works; nothing seems to go together. Gillespie has intensity, technical virtuosity—everything but a style. And that's something of a relief in this era of grimly uniform solo shows. Through June 7. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. . . . ¶ Selected works by Gillespie, from 1971 to the present, are at Kind, 136 Greene St., through June 8.)

John Koch (1909-78)—Realistic oil paintings of posh interiors in which people dabble at music (a sensitive-looking string trio pauses for tea) and art (nude models pose in the parlor). Koch was a facile paint handler who favored golden late-afternoon light—an Andrew Wyeth for the Upper East Side. The worst of these paintings, such as a still-life of a classical bust and a vase of lilies, come within a hair's breadth of kitsch, and even the best have about them a depressing, stifled air. Dorothy Parker called them "a delight to the eye and a joy to the memories, in case you have such well-bred memories." Through June 7. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"Pablo Picasso: Academic and Anti-Academic (1895-1900)"—A fascinating exhibition comprising the very first Picassos, beginning with a superb pencil drawing of a male nude which the thirteen-year-old Pablo submitted as a part of the entrance requirements to Barcelona's Llotja School of Fine Arts. Spanish art students weren't permitted to view the opposite sex naked; in lieu of female models, the males were given adolescent Gypsy boys, whom Picasso endows with a magical inner life. In addition to the academic works, the exhibit includes some precious doodles, such as a deft little oil sketch of three roosters. Through June 15. (Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. . . . NOTE: Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St., has Picasso oil portraits from 1920 to 1970. Through June 29. . . . Krugier, 41 E. 57th St., has works in several mediums from the fifties and sixties, along with photographs of the artist by David Douglas Duncan. Through June 30. . . . A selection of the artist's ceramics is at Hammer, 33 W. 57th St., through July 14. Open Mondays.)

Group Show—Paintings and collages from the fifties by Agnes Martin, Alice Trumbull Mason, and Anne Ryan. Through July 12. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. Closed Saturdays.)

Short List—AVIGDOR ARIKHA, Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays; through June 15. . . . JOSÉ BEDIA, Adams, 50 W. 57th St. Through June 7. . . . ROSS BLECKNER, Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through June 29. . . . JOHN CHAMBERLAIN and ELIZABETH MURRAY, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Both shows through June 8. . . . SANDRO CHIA and MALCOLM MORLEY, Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Both shows through June 8. . . . ROBERT GOODNOUGH, De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Through June 15. . . . DAVID HOCKNEY, Rob-

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ert Miller and Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Both shows through June 15. . . . **PER KIRKEBY,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays; through June 28. . . . **WIFREDO LAM,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. Through June 15. . . . **GEORGE MACIUNAS,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. Through June 22. . . . **MATTA,** Martin, 23 E. 73rd St. Through June 15. . . . **NANCY O'CONNOR,** Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. Through June 7. . . . **DANIEL SPOERRI,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. Through June 15. . . . **ANNE TRUITT,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through June 21.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Carroll Dunham—Ectoplasmic tenement buildings with Donald Duck lips and phallic knobs copulate and make war (is there a difference?) with one another. The painter's bizarre, cartoonish work is often compared to children's art, but this new exhibition of big bad doodles seems rather to be the work of a madman. Amusing, disturbing, and wallopingly authentic. Through June 22. (Nolan/Eckman, 560 Broadway.)

Julio Galán—New paintings, some incorporating mixed-medium elements, by the well-known Mexican eccentric; though they are primarily fantasy images of Latin American women, the erotic currents that coursed through much of his earlier work now seem hushed. But a cuckoo south-of-the-border surrealism remains his guiding imperative. He has tarted up these pictures with collage elements: a shock of fake blond hair adorns one of his sullen ladies, and beneath her head, floating in murky space, is a sacred heart fashioned out of a soiled and tawdry little pillow, pierced not by nails but by a hat pin. Through June 30. (Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Damien Hirst—"No Sense of Absolute Corruption," a bravura sideshow by the baddest of British bad-boy artists. In addition to some of his signature animal carcasses floating in formaldehyde, the show includes a gigantic ashtray filled with cigarette butts, several spin paintings, and a colorful contraption that keeps a beach ball perpetually aloft. For all its shock tactics and viscera, the exhibition is surprisingly funny. The works' implicit question: Just how far does an artist have to go to get the public's attention these days? Through June 15. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St.)

Toba Khedoori—Spectacularly fussy architectural drawings executed on huge sheets of paper coated with wax, which picks up a fascinating collection of hair and dust. The satisfying funkiness of the ground makes the incised purity of the artist's line seem slightly insane. Through June 15. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St.)

Yayoi Kusama—A survey of paintings, collages, and soft sculptures from the fifties and sixties by a pioneering Japanese minimalist. Elegant formalism (a famous square canvas covered with airmail stickers) abuts earthy sensuality (a chair upholstered in white canvas fingers that undulate like the tentacles of a sea anemone). A series of paintings of "infinity nets"—thousands of tiny overlapping circles—demonstrates the artist's interest in such painterly questions as color and composition without compromising her cool credentials. Through June 21. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

Pepón Osorio—"Badge of Honor," an installation of two rooms side-by-side: a nearly empty prison cell with a bed suspended from the wall and shoes on the floor, and a fantastically bright teen-age boy's bedroom, with reflective Mylar and totally postered walls. A black-and-white video of an inmate from Northern State Penitentiary, in New Jersey, is projected in the cell, while a similar video of the prisoner's son plays in the bedroom. Through June 15. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

Robert Ryman—The maximal minimalist has discovered design and (are you sitting down?) color, albeit the palest possible shades of beige and gray, which are painted over in his signature white, in every possible degree of reflectivity. The exhibit is exceptionally well mounted, with soaring interior architecture, designed by the artist, which gives every painting its own wall. And these works deserve special treatment: looking at Ryman takes time, but the longer you linger the more intensely they glow. Through June 21. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St.)

Thomas Trosch—"Musical Comedy Medley," a series of biggish, rather ambitious paintings, mostly of women sporting drag-queen-style interpretations of Charles James's couture in luxurious but claustrophobic environments. Trosch has adapted his painterly techniques to his subject matter, using gaudy colors and heavy impastos somewhat reminiscent of the gushy de Kooning of the sixties—but, whereas de Kooning adhered to a liquescent, seemingly organic painterly dribble, Trosch, as if to heighten the artifice of his pictures, favors hard, crusty surfaces. All of the pictures incorporate text elements drawn from Broadway and Hollywood musicals by Alan Jay Lerner, Cole Porter, and Lorenz Hart, plus the odd snippet of Tristan Tzara's Dadaist poetry. Altogether a very rich dish. Through June 30. (Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Rachel Whiteread—Since she won Britain's prestigious Turner Prize, in 1993, for a concrete cast of the interior space of a house in the East End of London, this artist has had a spectacular ride to the top of the heap. In this solo show, she continues filling up empty spaces to create ghostly non-objects—anti-bookshelves in plaster, an anti-bathtub in rubber—which seem to have more heft and substance than the real objects that were pressed up against them. Through June 18. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

Short List—**DITI ALMOG,** Boesky & Callery, 51 Greene St. Through June 8. . . . **MICHAEL ASHKIN,** Keenan, 494 Broadway. Through June 8. . . . **SQUEAK CARNWATH,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through June 15. . . . **MERLIN CARPENTER,** Petzel, 26 Wooster St. Through June 29. . . . **KAREN CARSON,** Maynes, 225 Lafayette St. Through June 29. . . . **CHEN ZHEN,** Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. Through June 8. . . . **WILLEM DE KOONING,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6. Through June 30. . . . **DAVID DEUTSCH,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. Through June 22. . . . **SPELMAN EVANS DOWNER,** Arstark, 568 Broadway. Through June 28. . . . **LUCY GUNNING,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. Open Wednesdays

There is no more daunting target on the agenda of scientific research than the replacement of fossil fuels with energy from the sun. If science triumphs, the use of inexhaustible, pollution-free solar energy will someday bring on an era of unprecedented health and prosperity. The world's decision makers often relegate solar research to the back burner when oil emergencies abate. But the challenge never vanishes in sun-drenched, resource-poor Israel. ❦ The Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot – equipped with spectacular, spohisticated solar furnace and solar tower facilities – is an acknowledged leader in solar research. Its experts pursue the development of new, cost-efficient ways to harness, store and transport the energy of the sun. ❦ Current Weizmann projects reflect ambitious goals: collecting solar energy in one country or region and shipping it to another by "solar energy pipeline"; producing hydrogen from water for use as a clean fuel; laser light produced by solar power instead of electricity; solar-heat gas turbines generating electric power. ❦ Albert Sabin once observed that the development of solar energy will benefit humanity more than any vaccine. Solar research merits support wherever sunshine inspires scientific imagination and skill.

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through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6; through June 15. . . . **DONALD JUDD**, Inglett, 100 Wooster St. Through June 29. . . . **CHARLES LONG**, Bonakdar, 130 Prince St. Through June 29. . . . **KRISTIN OPPENHEIM**, 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through June 15. . . . **MIMMO PALADINO**, Sperone Westwater, 121 and 142 Greene St. Through June 15. . . . **JASON SIMON**, Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6. Through June 9.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Barbara Kasten—Cyanotypes, Polaroids, and regular Cibachrome prints depicting ancient ruins, artifacts, and fossils. Greek tanagra figurines are rendered nearly abstract in dazzling, stainlike fuschias, indigos, and tangerines. Photograms of amphorae from the Museum of Underwater Archeology, in Bodrum, Turkey, seem to float in a sea of brushed-on cyan. It takes a little time for this artful treatment of science and history to register, but when it does, it's intoxicating. Through June 15. (Richardson, 560 Broadway.)

Danny Lyon—"Letter from Chiapas," a small sampling of black-and-white prints and color montages made during three trips to that Mexican state last year: subdued images, mainly of Mayan women and children in the markets of San Cristóbal de las Casas and the Zapatista villages of La Realidad and Zócalo, in the photographer's typical mode of personal and eloquent reportage. Through June 29. (Lowinsky, 578 Broadway.)

Josef Sudek (1896-1976)—The Czech photographer experimented with pigment printing in the forties and fifties, and the slower process made his poetic, precisely observed still-lifes—loaves of bread and eggs, glasses of water with roses, in chromas from ochre to olive to sepia—by turns more romantic and more sombre. Trees in the gardens of Prague Castle and Troja Castle, however, are rendered in subtler tones of blue and charcoal, giving them an air of mystery mixed with modernity. Through July 7. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

"Paul Himmel and the Brodovitch Circle"—Himmel worked for *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Fortune*, and several other magazines from the forties through the sixties; his photographs exemplified the kind of movement demanded by Alexey Brodovitch, the renowned art director of *Bazaar*. This show, which concentrates on his noncommercial work, includes many pictures by other leading lights, such as Robert Frank, Louis Faurer, Lisette Model, Bruce Davidson, Irving Penn, Lillian Bassman, Richard Avedon, Martin Munkacsi, and Ted Croner. Through June 22. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

Short List—**CARL CHIARENZA** and **STEPHAN BRIGIDI**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Both shows through July 12. . . . **ALBERT CHONG**, Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through July 20. . . . **CLEGG & GUTTMANN**, American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. Through June 8. . . . **BRUCE CRATSLEY**, A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. Open daily, 10 to midnight; through July 30. . . . **WALKER EVANS** and **JIN MING**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Both shows through June 29. . . . **GERARD FIERET**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through June 29. . . . **RALPH GIBSON**, Castelli, 420 West Broadway. Through July 26. . . . **EMMET GOWIN** and **DIANA MICHENER**, Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Both shows through June 29. . . . **JAN GROOVER**, Borden, 560 Broadway. Through June 22. . . . **HELMAR LERSKI**, Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Through June 22. . . . **HERBERT LIST**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through June 15. . . . **INGE MORATH**, Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; through June 12. . . . **FREDERIC OHRINGER**, Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Through July 12. . . . **SEBASTIANO PIRAS**, Helman, 20 W. 57th St. Through July 14.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and El Museo del Barrio.)

JACK MOLLOY

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Opening night of the Met's free outdoor performances: Puccini's "Turandot," with sopranos Ghena Dimitrova and Veronica Villarroel, tenor Lando Bartolini, and bass Paul Plishka. Nello Santi conducts. (North Meadow, Central Park, near Fifth Ave. and 102nd St. June 11 at 8.)

Flying Horse Honan Opera Troupe—With the Chinese-opera diva Wang Hai-ling, in "Tang Po-hu Courts Chiu Hsiang." (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. June 7-8 at 7:30 and June 8-9 at 2.)

Opéra Français de New York—The troupe presents a semi-staged production of "Les Mamelles de Tirésias," Poulenc's irreverent Surrealist opera about bosoms and baby-making. Yves Abel conducts a cast that includes soprano Amy Burton and baritone Brett Polegato. Also on the bill is a shorter, non-operatic work, Poulenc's dramatic monologue "La Dame de Monte Carlo." (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 11 at 8.)

"Dead End Avenue"—Final performances of a music-theatre work by William Schimmel and Micki Goodman, who describe it as "an ontological journey with the accordion as centerpiece." (Anahid Sofian Studio, 29 W. 15th St. June 8-9 at 8. For information about tickets, call 876-0827.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Florilegium Chamber Choir—JoAnn Rice leads Hugo Weisgall's "Evening Liturgies" and Walter Hilse's Mass. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. June 5 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

American Festival of Microtonal Music Orchestra—For fifteen years the festival has explored the (mostly modern) repertoire of music that employs unusual tuning systems and minuscule divisions of the octave. In the festival's largest production to date, its founder, Johnny Reinhard, leads seventy musicians in his realization of Charles Ives's hour-long "Universe Symphony." Ives worked on three sections of the piece—"Formation of the Waters and Mountains," "Earth, Evolution in Nature and Humanity," and "Heaven, the Rise of All to the Spiritual"—in 1915, but he never finished it. A version by the composer Larry Austin, who doctored what was there with a fair amount of new material, was unveiled in Cincinnati two years ago and recorded on the Centaur label. Now Mr. Reinhard, a bassoonist who is probably the world's leading microtonalist, offers a version that employs only Ives's notes. (He holds the opinion that the manuscript wasn't so much incomplete as illegible—a puzzle that needed solving.) Next season, he'll lead the piece in Paris and Moscow, but New York gets the honor of the première. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 6 at 8.)

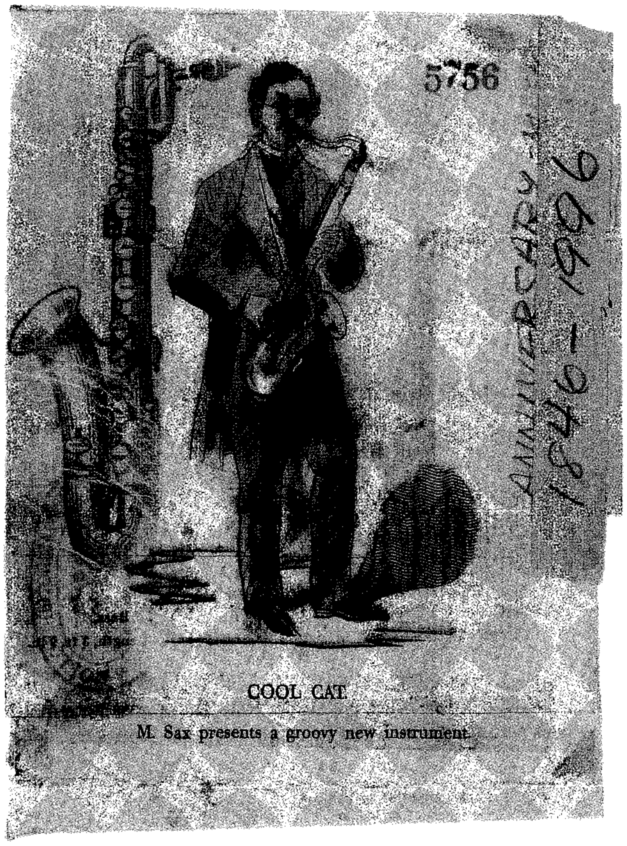
City Island Baroque Ensemble—The Sunday concert series at this way-uptown bed-and-breakfast celebrates its third anniversary with performances of concertos by Corelli, Bach, and Vivaldi. Harpsichordist Ilan Rechtman and violinists Anton Miller and Colin Jacobsen are the soloists. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. June 9 at noon.)

Metropolitan Greek Chorale—In a program that includes motets by Schütz and Hans Leo Hassler, Handel's "Utrecht Jubilate," and works by five Greek composers. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 9 at 3.)

Rottenberg Chorale—The group celebrates the three-thousandth anniversary of the founding of Jerusalem with Charles Osborne's "Sephardic Havdallah" and other works. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 9 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

Music of the Indian Jews—A series of performances and lectures devoted to Asian music and dance turns its attention to the Bene Israel—the Jewish minority of the subcontinent—whose little-known repertoire will be discussed and performed by Romeil Daniel. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. June 5 at 3. No tickets necessary.)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Lincoln Center marks the sax's hundred and fiftieth birthday.

Mordecai Shehori—The pianist performs works by Rameau, Beethoven, Chopin, and Liszt. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 5 at 8.)

Saxophone Blowout—The Belgian instrument builder Adolphe Antoine-Joseph Sax would doubtless be all but unknown today had he not taken out a patent, in 1846, on an instrument he had invented and attached his name to. In general, the saxophone has been treated as the Rodney Dangerfield of the classical world, a reputation not exactly enhanced by certain Presidential performances of recent memory. The New York Public Library honors the saxophone's sesquicentennial with a week of recitals and lectures designed to delve into the instrument's classical, popular, and jazz legacies. June 6: A lecture on the saxophone patent. . . . ¶ June 7: Works for alto saxophone by Polish and Belgian composers, played by Cezariusz Gadzina. . . . ¶ June 8: Ensemble works performed by the Trondheim Saxofonkvartett, a Norwegian group . . . . ¶ June 10: Contemporary American works, featuring saxophonist John Sampen. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. All events are at 3. No tickets necessary. Through June 15.)

Bargemusic—For the summer, New York's only floating concert hall is adding Friday-night performances to its lineup. June 6 at 7:30: Mendelssohn's D-Minor Piano Trio, Barber's Cello Sonata, and Franck's Piano Quintet. . . . ¶ June 7 at 7:30: The Mendelssohn and Franck works, plus Debussy's Violin Sonata. . . . ¶ June 9 at 4: Mozart's E-Major Piano Trio (K. 542), Fauré's C-Minor Piano Quartet, and Taneyev's G-Minor Piano Quintet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061.)

Ayako Yoshida—Violinist, playing sonatas by Beethoven (No. 9, in A Major, the "Kreutzer"), Bartók (for solo violin), and Strauss, as well as James MacMillan's "After the Tryst"; with pianist Anthony Hewitt. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 6 at 7.)

New York Consort of Viols and the Prism Saxophone Quartet—Now, *there* are some strange bedfellows. But who knows? The contrast—the introverted tones of a viol consort (playing seventeenth-century English fantasias and modern works by Daniel Pinkham and Will Ayton) and the extroverted sounds of a saxophoursome (in works by Glazunov and Richard Rodney Bennett)—could turn out to be provocative. And when else will you get to hear ensembles this disparate playing together—as the two groups will be doing in Venetian polychoral works by Gabrieli and Cesario Gussago and in a new work written for this concert by David Loeb? (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. June 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 580-9787.)

New York Camerata—The chamber ensemble offers a trio sonata by Jean-Baptiste Loeillet, Eugene Goossens' "Five Impressions of a Holiday," the première of Walter Winslow's "A Voice from Elysium," and Beethoven's G-Major Piano Trio (Op. 1, No. 2). (St. John's-in-the-Village, West 11th St. at Waverly Pl. June 9 at 4. For information about tickets, call 866-3459.)

Juniper Ensemble—An oddly constituted chamber group—violin, cello, recorder, and three guitars—performs music by Mauro Giuliani, Hans Martin Linde, and others. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. June 9 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

Piano Trios—Violinist Colin Jacobson, cellist Edward Arron, and pianist Avner Arad perform trios by Mozart (in C Major, K. 548) and Schubert (in E-Flat Major). (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. June 9 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Steven Copes—The violinist is assisted by pianist Ilan Rechtman in Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 9 and lighter works by Kreisler. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. June 10 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

Cape May Music Festival—The annual spring festival, now at its midpoint, runs through June 30. June 6: Stephen Rogers Radcliffe conducts the Cape May Festival Orchestra in Poulenc's Sinfonietta, Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 (with Seung-Un Ha), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 4. . . . ¶ June 9: An orchestral pops concert. . . . ¶ June 11: The New York Chamber Ensemble plays Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat," as well as works by Françaix and Weber. (Evenings at 8, at various venues in Cape May, New Jersey. For information, call 1-800 275-4278.)

Music Mountain—Opening concerts of the festival's sixty-seventh season, which will run through Sept. 1. June 8 at 8: Harpsichordist Igor Kipnis plays Bach's "Goldberg" Variations. . . . ¶ June 9 at 3: Music Mountain's speciality is string quartets, and the first to arrive this season is the Colorado, playing quartets by Haydn (in F Minor, Op. 20, No. 5) and Beethoven (in C Major, Op. 29), as well as Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht" (with colleagues assisting). (Falls Village, Connecticut. For information, call 1-203 824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Long Shots in Silks—And it's off to Elmont, Long Island, for the Belmont Stakes, the longest horse race of the Triple Crown. The colossal Belmont Park (it spills over into both the 718 and the 516 area codes) constitutes a kind of scale model New York: Park Avenue swells inspect the day's talent inside the velvet-turfed paddock, local families toddle between the food court and the pari-mutuel windows, while bettors partial to curried goat (from the West Indian snack bar on the grandstand level) take positions outside the walking ring, marking their racing forms with miniature pencils. In 1905 Belmont was the site of the first-ever traffic jam; an equestrian bottleneck could occur at the finish line this year. Who will be the sprat among the minnows? With Grindstone's retirement, Unbridled's Song's bum hoof, Louis Quatorze's questionable staying power, and Cavonnier's rotten luck, it could well come down to who enjoyed his oats the most at breakfast. (Belmont Park. 1-516 488-6000 or 1-718 641-4700. NYCE machines on the premises.)

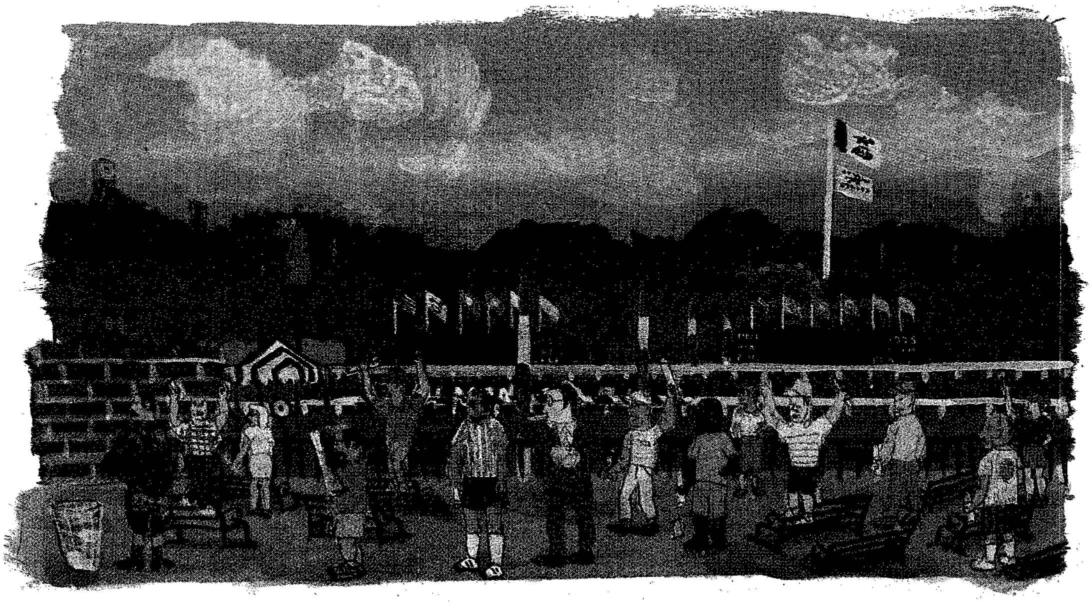
The Buick Classic—On the manicured drive into the Westchester Country Club, golfer Vijay Singh says, he gets a tingly feeling. Well, he ought to. In 1993, on his rookie tour, Singh won his first P.G.A. event at the club, and last year he won again. This week he's hoping to surpass the two other repeat winners, Jack Nicklaus and Seve Ballesteros, with a third title. Though he brings a new and effective putting style to the hard, fast greens, Singh tends to distance himself from the competition mainly with his gambles on the tee shot. To negotiate the course's doglegs and punishing rough requires accuracy and shot-shaping. Cautious golfers reach for a three-wood or a two-iron, but Singh credits his success to sticking with the driver: "Instead of changing my game plan just to hit fairways," the sweet-swinging Fijian explains, "I stay aggressive off the tee." (Harrison, New York. For more information, call 1-800 765-4742. June 6-9.)

Does a Dog Have Buddha Nature?—The third annual Day of Meditation settles into Central Park this Saturday, with a full schedule of silent sitting, dharma combat (Monk: "Teacher, I have heard that you have personally seen Nansen. Is this true?" Master: "Nansen produces big turnips"), and study breaks with the Frick and Frack of Buddhism, Philip Glass and Allen Ginsberg. (The Ramble, below Belvedere Castle. June 8, from 12:30 to 5:30. For more information, call *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* at 645-1143.)

Oh, Rob!—A Brooklyn native who has been more closely identified with New Rochelle and the Twin Cities comes home: this Sunday, Mary Tyler Moore will be crowned Queen of Brooklyn, usurping a throne currently occupied by Larry King. Citizens of the unknowable borough will celebrate their new monarch and her court (Harvey Keitel, David Benzali, Max Roach, Cousin Brucie Morrow) with an outpouring of readings and feasting. (The coronation takes place in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden at 12:30 on June 9. For information about the festivities, call 1-718 855-7882, ext. 54.)

Autobiographies—June 5 at 7:30: Barbara Grizzuti Harrison reads from "An Accidental Autobiography." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 22nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 6 at 7:30: Jamaica Kincaid reads from her latest novel, "The Autobiography of My Mother." (Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 1-718 243-0424. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 10 at 7: Judy Nelson reads from "Choices: My Journey After Leaving My Husband for Martina and a Lesbian Life." (A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—June 6 at 6: Folk-art historian Drunell Levinson addresses contemporary doll-making and the art of Jeanelle Myers. (Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St. No charge beyond museum admission.) . . . ¶ June 10 at 8: Anna Deavere Smith talks with Jessye Norman about the diva's career. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)



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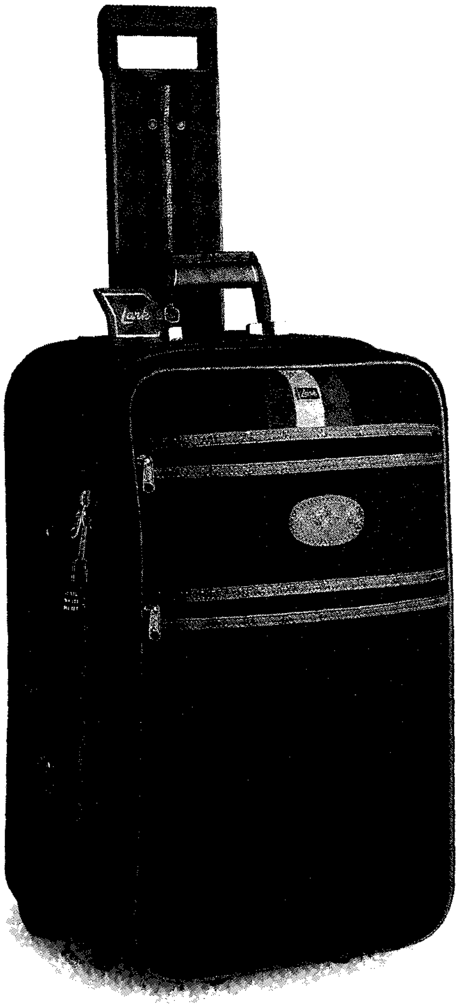

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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Blush—Li Shaohong's drama, set in post-Revolutionary China, tells the story of a triangle involving a former prostitute (Wang Ji), her wealthy young client (Wang Zhiwen), and her best friend (He Saifei). Adapted by the director and Ni Zhen from a novel by Su Tong. In Cantonese. Opening June 7. (Quad Cinema.)

Desolation Angels—Writer-director Tim McCann's drama about a young New Yorker (Michael Rodrick) who becomes unhinged when he learns that his girlfriend (Jennifer Thomas) has been raped by a friend of his (Peter Bassett). Opening June 7. (Quad Cinema.)

Heavy—The story of an overweight pizza chef (Pruitt Taylor Vince) who falls in love with his new waitress (Liv Tyler). With Shelley Winters and Deborah Harry. Written and directed by James Mangold. Opening June 5. (Film Forum.)

Kaspar Hauser—A new take on the mystery of the nineteenth-century wild child (here played by André Eisermann), which links his early imprisonment and ultimate assassination to German political rivalries. Written and directed by Peter Sehr. In German. Opening June 7. (Cinema Village.)

The Phantom—Billy Zane is cast as the comic-strip hero in Simon Wincer's action adventure. With Treat Williams, Kristy Swanson, and Patrick McGoohan. Written by Jeffrey Boam. Opening June 7. (Art Greenwich Twin, Astor Plaza, 86th Street East Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and 34th Street Showplace.)

The Rock—A thriller about terrorists on Alcatraz, featuring Sean Connery, Nicolas Cage, and Ed Harris. Directed by Michael Bay. Screenplay by David Weisberg, Douglas Cook, and Mark Rosner. Opening June 7. (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Embassy 3, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 28.)

The Arrival—Charlie Sheen stars as a NASA astronomer caught between a government conspiracy and an alien invasion, in a thriller written and directed by David Twohy. With Ron Silver, Richard Schiff, and Lindsay Crouse. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Astor Plaza; through June 6.)

The Birdcage—Mike Nichols's remake of "La Cage aux Folles" (1978) largely contents itself with decking out what appears to be a profoundly, unalterably French farce in American drag; the cautious, sensible approach taken by Nichols and his screenwriter, Elaine May, has the drawback of making this movie feel a little, as the French might say, de trop. Although Robin Williams and Nathan Lane, as the bickering middle-aged lovers originally played by Ugo Tognazzi and Michel Serrault, are skillful, the script doesn't give them much opportunity to distinguish themselves from their memorable predecessors. Oddly, the funniest performer here is Gene Hackman, playing an aggressively straight, family-values-spouting politician. Also with Dianne Wiest.—T.R. (3/18/96) (Baronet, Coronet, Criterion Center, and 62nd and Broadway.)

Cold Comfort Farm—John Schlesinger's eccentric rural comedy is based on a 1932 novel by Stella Gibbons. The bright, sophisticated young heroine, Flora Poste (Kate Beckinsale), goes to live with obscure relatives in Sussex, and, appalled by their ignorance and their dour inertia, sets out to change their stubborn ways; she's Jeeves in skirts, subverting the blind workings of Fate to her own ends. Beckinsale keeps her composure while veteran character actors—Eileen Atkins, Sheila Burrell, Stephen Fry, Freddie Jones, Joanna Lumley, and Ian McKellen—attempt to dazzle her, and us, with their virtuosity. Schlesinger, working from a script by Malcolm Bradbury, maintains a steady rhythm and a light, cheerful mood.—T.R. (5/13/96) (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.)

Dragonheart—A tenth-century knight (Dennis Quaid) and his fire-breathing sidekick (whose voice is provided by Sean Connery) fight an evil king (David Thewlis), in an adventure directed by Rob Cohen. Screenplay by Charles Edward Pogue. (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th St. East, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

Eddie—A comedy directed by Steve Rash, in which Whoopi Goldberg plays a limousine driver who becomes the coach of the New York Knicks. With Frank Langella. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Embassy 2, Guild, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Fargo—Everybody in Joel and Ethan Coen's movie talks with painful slowness, as if the icy Minnesota air were freezing their chops; the resulting mood is lugubrious and oddly winning. The story, about a hopeless businessman (William H. Macy) who hires a couple of crooks (Peter Stormare and Steve Buscemi) to kidnap his wife, offers the usual Coen compound of random daftness and concentrated violence. Frances McDormand has a high old time as the police chief of the town of Brainerd; decent and unhurried (her character is seven months pregnant), she brings order to the weirdness and warms it up.—A.L. (3/25/96) (Art Greenwich Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

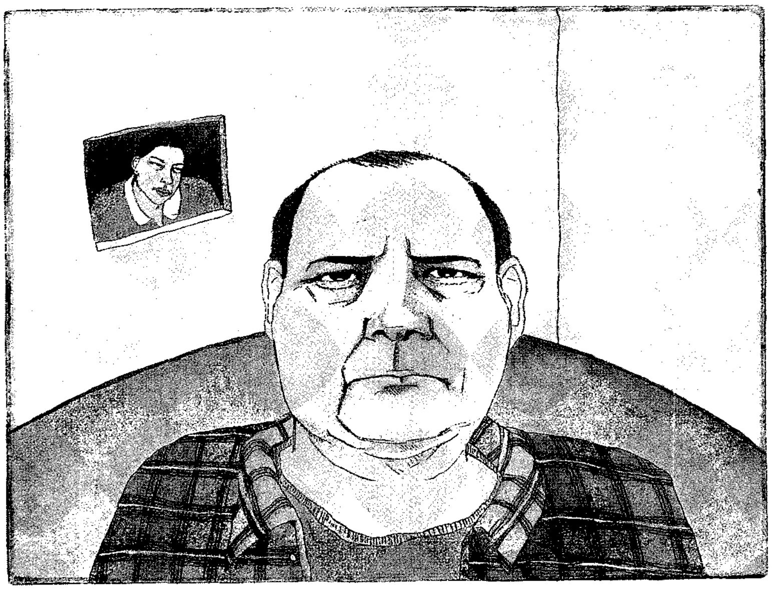
Flipper—Elijah Wood joins Paul Hogan and that dolphin in a family film directed by Alan Shapiro. With Isaac Hayes. (Art Greenwich Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, National Twin, Olympia, Orpheum VII, Regency, and 23rd St. West Triplex.)

Flirting with Disaster—David O. Russell's farcical road movie sets a thirtyish New Yorker (Ben Stiller), adopted as a small child, on a cross-country search for his biological parents, accompanied by his wife (Patricia Arquette) and an adoption-agency official (Téa Leoni). Despite some expert performances—by George Segal and Mary Tyler Moore as the adoptive parents (nervous urban kvetches), and Alan Alda and Lily Tomlin as the biological ones (devious ex-hippies)—the picture remains as confused as its hero; unlike him, it never does find its identity.—T.R. (4/15/96) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 68th St. Playhouse, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin; through June 6.)

The Horseman on the Roof—Jean-Paul Rappeneau's adaptation of Jean Giono's 1951 novel, about a cholera epidemic in nineteenth-century Provence. With Juliette Binoche and Olivier Martinez. In French. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Paris.)

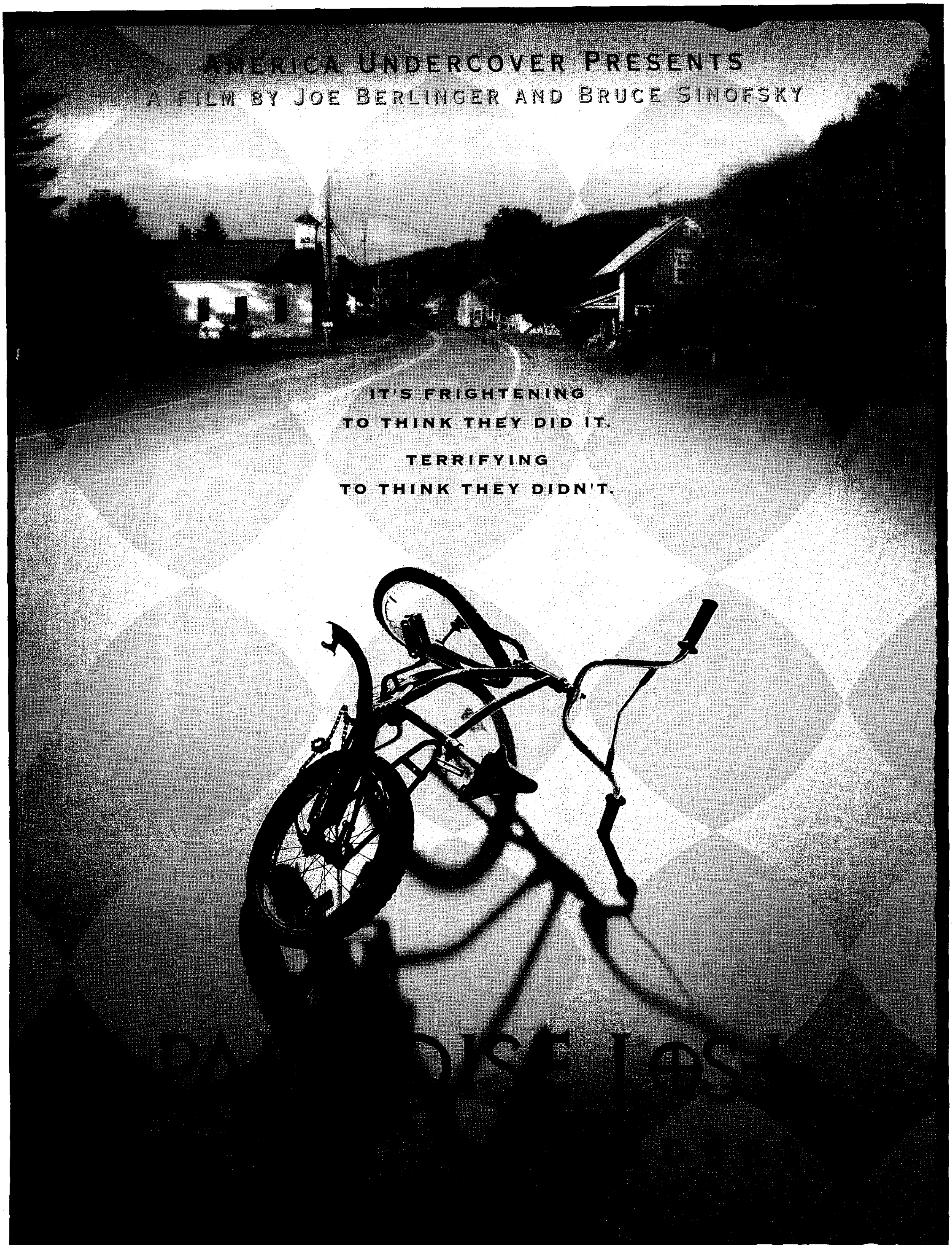
I Shot Andy Warhol—The story of Valerie Solanas (Lili Taylor), the deranged woman who, in 1968, ambushed Warhol at the Factory and nearly killed him. The director, Mary Harron, tries to depict Solanas as a complex, tragicomic figure, but the protagonist can't bear the weight that the film puts on her, and Taylor's monotonous performance doesn't do much to lighten the load. The languid-hysterical Factory atmosphere feels accurate, though, and so does Jared Harris's witty portrayal of Warhol. Also with Stephen Dorff (as Candy Darling), Michael Imperioli (Ondine), and Donovan Leitch (Gerard Malanga).—T.R. (5/13/96) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . ¶ Sutton; through June 6.)

Jane Eyre—Franco Zeffirelli's adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's novel is more sedate than you might expect. The reason to see it is Charlotte Gainsbourg, who plays Jane with just the right combination of ethereality and guts. William Hurt makes a rather delicate but acceptable Rochester. With Anna Paquin as the young Jane, and Joan Plowright as Rochester's housekeeper, Mrs. Fair-



Opening June 5 at Film Forum, Liv Tyler and Pruitt Taylor Vince in James Mangold's "Heavy."

LARA TOMLIN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fax.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

The Man by the Shore—An unusually powerful heartbreaker, set in Haiti in the early nineteen-sixties and told from the point of view of an eight-year-old. The leisurely opening sequence, in which Sarah (Jennifer Zubar), singing and playing in her grandmother's attic, sees a man out in the street being tortured, seems to promise something impressionistic and elliptical. But an artful layering of flashbacks starts to lay out a story. Two years earlier, Sarah's father, a captain in the military police, caves in and betrays a friend to the Tontons Macoutes; soon after this lapse, he is edged out of his post by a brutish new boss and forced to flee the country, and now Sarah lives in hiding. The movie is about as fresh, as humane, and—with a few exceptions—as subtle as political allegory can get. Along the way it turns into a thriller as well, the suspense building as to whether Sarah's grandmother will be able to get the girl and her sisters out of the country. The cinematography, by Armand Marco, is strong, and so is Zubar: emotionally she's utterly pure, which makes Sarah much less predictable than the world-weary adults around her. Written and directed by Raoul Peck. In French and Creole.—S.K. (Quad Cinema.)

Mission: Impossible—This action blockbuster's obvious selling points are nostalgia for the long-running TV series and the presence of a big star, Tom Cruise (who is also one of the producers), but the real star here is the director, Brian De Palma. His elegant, baroque, multilayered style is so perfectly suited to the material that even the most blatant commercial strategies of David Koepp and Robert Towne's screenplay somehow wind up playing to his strengths. De Palma finds a current of bitter humor in the betrayals that set the plot in motion. And he uses the movie's up-to-date technology as a means of increasing the density and formal complexity of his imagery, with computer screens and video monitors splintering the action into near-Cubist rearrangements of visual data. The film is an exhilarating magic act: De Palma's hand is quicker than even the most alert spectator's eye. Also with Jon Voight, Emmanuelle Béart, Henry Czerny, Ving Rhames, Vanessa Redgrave, Kristin Scott-Thomas, and (unbilled) Emilio Estevez.—T.R. (6/3/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud—The latest demonstration of Parisian decorum from the French director Claude Sautet. Nelly (Emmanuelle Béart) leaves her marriage and goes to work for Arnaud (Michel Serrault), a former judge who is writing his memoirs. The two tiptoe toward love, then pull back. The movie is played (as you would expect) with watchful finesse, particularly by the morose and sardonic Serrault, but you sometimes long for a little wildness; Béart's character should be driving men crazy, but what does she do? She *interests* them. In French.—A.L. (4/22/96) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Postman—Antonio Skármeta's bittersweet 1985 novel, "Burning Patience," on which this movie is loosely based, told the story of Mario, a lonely postman who delivers mail to Pablo Neruda on Isla Negra, the corner of Chile where the poet spent much of his later life. In Michael Radford's lovely but sanitized version, the action has been moved to picturesque Italy. As Neruda, the great Philippe Noiret somehow conquers being dubbed in Spanish-accented Italian; as Mario, the late Italian comedian Massimo Troisi is painfully affecting. In Italian.—S.K. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

Primal Fear—In Gregory Hoblit's conventional but enjoyable courtroom drama, Richard Gere plays an attorney defending a young man accused of killing the Archbishop of Chicago. The story is full of tired characters (a prosecutor who's an old flame, a corrupt city developer), yet Frances McDormand, Laura Linney, John Mahoney, and Andre Braugher are all so casually skillful that Gere's c'mon-you-know-you-want-me style has the room it needs to play. But it's Edward Norton, as the Boo Radley-like defendant, who steals the movie. Hoblit has an economical style, and he gets the job done with very little fuss.—B.D. (Olympia and 72nd Street East. . . . ¶ Embassy 4; through June 6.)

Someone Else's America—Goran Paskaljević's comedy, about a family of illegal aliens from Montenegro living in Brooklyn. With Tom Conti and Miki Manojlović. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Spy Hard—Leslie Nielsen plays "Steele, Dick Steele," an idiotic Bond-like secret agent (code name WD-40) called in by the American government to stop a cackling, armless villain named General Rancor (Andy Griffith, his eyebrows combed out to look like Stalin's) from destroying the world. As usual, the best gag of all is Nielsen's suave, serious, almost pathologically unembarrassed way with nonsensical dialogue. The problem is that Bond films are so campy, excessive, and dated to begin with that the parody here quickly begins to seem secondhand. With an intelligently silly Nicollette Sheridan as the love interest, and Weird Al Yankovic, in a hilarious opening-credits sequence, singing the theme song underwater against a cartoon backdrop of obese aquatic nymphs. Directed by Rick Friedberg.—S.K. (Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin, and Embassy 1; through June 6. . . . ¶ Embassy 4; starting June 7.)

The Truth About Cats and Dogs—Janeane Garofalo plays a radio veterinarian; one day a caller (Ben Chaplin) asks her out, but she feels insecure, so she gets her beautiful neighbor (Uma Thurman) to impersonate her and tags along pretending to be a friend. Garofalo has a certain barbed charm, but it's put to shallow use here, while Thurman is condemned to play yet another male trophy, a fantasy girl who scrunches her nose when she laughs and walks like a newborn fawn. Directed by Michael Lehmann.—S.K. (Art Greenwich Twin, Beekman, Criterion Center, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and 23rd St. West Triplex.)

Twister—Another hectic thriller from Jan De Bont, who had a runaway hit with "Speed." The new movie is, if possible, even more content-free; all you get is a bunch of terrifying tornadoes, pursued with glee by a married pair of professional storm chasers, Bill (Bill Paxton) and Jo (Helen Hunt). These two are supposed to be getting a divorce, but you don't really care what happens to them, or to the unfortunate Melissa (Jami Gertz), who aims to take Jo's place—you're too busy having your mind blown by the houses, cars, and cows tumbling across the skies.—A.L. (5/20/96) (Criterion Center, Gemini, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

Welcome to the Dollhouse—Todd Solondz's low-budget independent movie, which won the Grand Jury Prize at the most recent Sundance Film Festival, pitilessly chronicles the indignities visited on an unpopular seventh grader by her vicious classmates and her grotesque family. The picture wallows in the details of her daily persecution without ever quite settling on a coherent attitude toward it. Solondz wobbles between glib poignance and scabrous comedy until, finally, his urge to avenge the humiliations of his own New Jersey childhood seems to get the better of him. As the film grinds on, it grows steadily nastier and more hysterical: in one scene near the end, the filmmaker actually ridicules a mother's grief at the kidnapping of her youngest child. It's a hateful movie.—T.R. (5/27/96) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME: Lincoln Square. . . . **ANGELS & INSECTS** (reviewed in our issue of 1/29/96): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **ANTONIA'S LINE:** Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3. . . . **ASHES OF TIME:** Cinema Village. . . . **BROKEN ARROW** (2/19/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BUTTERFLY KISS:** Angelika 57. . . . **CITY HALL** (2/19/96): Manhattan Twin. . . . **COLD FEVER:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE CRAFT:** Criterion Center and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . **DEAD MAN:** Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **DEAD MAN WALKING** (1/8/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DIABOLIQUE** (4/1/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FEAR:** Manhattan Twin. . . . **THE FLOWER OF MY SECRET** (3/25/96): Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE GREAT WHITE HYPE:** National Twin. . . . **GUIMBA: THE TYRANT:** Cinema Village. . . . **JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH** (4/22/96): 86th Street East Twin. . . . **LEAVING LAS VEGAS** (11/6/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MA SAISON PRÉFÉRÉE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **MIGHTY APHRODITE** (10/30/95): Sutton. . . . **THE MONSTER:** Angelika 57 and Cinema 3rd Avenue. . . . **ORIGINAL GANGSTAS:** Embassy 3. . . . **THE PALLBEARER:** Cinema II. . . . **SENSE AND SENSIBILITY** (12/18/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SGT. BILKO** (4/8/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SUNSET PARK:** Criterion Center. . . . **A THIN LINE BETWEEN LOVE AND HATE:** Criterion Center. . . . **12 MONKEYS** (1/22/96): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **TWO DEATHS:** Quad Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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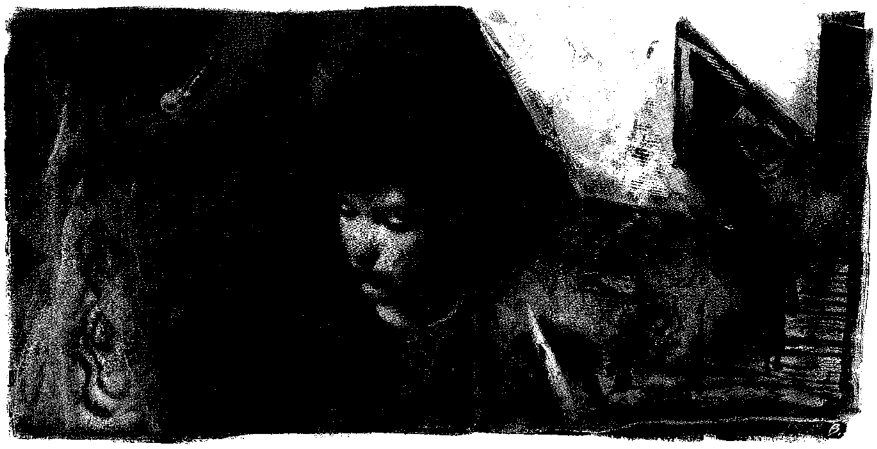
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Baronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini 1 and 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

La Belle Noiseuse (1991)—The first half of this two-part, four-hour Jacques Rivette film is a droll and intriguing portrait of an artist and his model: the exalted painter Frenhofer uses Marianne, the voluptuous girlfriend of a younger painter, to finish a nude study of a crazily destructive woman. Rivette brings us up close to Frenhofer's eye and hand and to Marianne's body, and the result is a refined form of voyeurism—we respond to Marianne's curves by way of Frenhofer's consciousness. As Frenhofer, Michel Piccoli puts on a display of comic virtuosity: every shift of his pen or his chair gets a laugh. And as Marianne, Emmanuelle Béart summons just the right combination of self-consciousness and fearlessness. When the two are taking each other's measure, the film has a hypnotic pull. But in the second part, Rivette veers into psychodrama without creating enough psychological context, and the pleasing, biscuity tone splits and crumbles. Pascal Bonitzer, Christine Laurent, and Rivette adapted the script from Balzac's story "Gillette; or, the Unknown Masterpiece." In French.—M.S. (Symphony Space; June 11.)



At Symphony Space, Maya Deren's "Meshes of the Afternoon."

TIM BOWER

Bye Bye Braverman (1968)—Sidney Lumet takes Wallace Markfield's mean-spirited satirical novel, "To an Early Grave," and turns the material into a crudely affectionate comic romp. The movie is often gross and it's sloppily thrown together, but the characters' rhetoric has some juice in it. When Braverman, a minor literary figure, suddenly dies, his four literary friends gather in Greenwich Village, pile into a Volkswagen, set out to attend the funeral service in Brooklyn, and get lost. It's a low-comedy situation played for emotional wallowing as well as for laughs; you keep wishing the camera would back away a bit. With George Segal; Jack Warden (miscast as a poet); Sorrell Booke, who has some wonderful mad movements of his head, as a fussy little book reviewer; and Joseph Wiseman, whose cold, bitter characterization is very effective.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; June 5-6.)

The King of Marvin Gardens (1972)—Indecipherable, dark-toned movie about brothers and spurious goals and the American Dream. Set in the decaying playground of Atlantic City, in the gray, wintry off-season, it keeps declaring its alienation. Bruce Dern works hard trying to be charismatic as the promoter brother who fronts for black gangsters. Jack Nicholson is the artist brother. Trying to act intellectual, Nicholson wears a prissy expression, huddles in his overcoat, and gives a dim, ploddingly serious performance. (If the roles had been reversed the film might have had a *little* energy.) This is an unqualified disaster of the type that only talented people have; the producer-director, Bob Rafelson, and the scriptwriter, Jacob Brackman, seem to be saying "Let them eat metaphors."—P.K. (Film Forum 2; June 5-6.)

Payday (1973)—Shot entirely on location in Alabama, it's an acrid, hardboiled melodrama with a feeling for authentic characters and details. An exceptionally functional script, by the novelist Don Carpenter, makes it possible for the director, Daryl Duke, to cover the grimy country-music scene of a small-time recording star—a goaty, rancidly unromantic third-rate Johnny Cash: Maury Dann (Rip Torn) is a sweating rajah, drinking Coke and beer and bourbon, smoking pot and popping pills in the back of his Cadillac between two girls. The movie's only real flaw is the flaw that's also present in hardboiled fiction: when a world is this clearly defined, our imagination is frustrated.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; June 10-11.)

Sunday Bloody Sunday (1971)—John Schlesinger directed this complex, remarkably modulated English movie about three Londoners and the breakup of two love affairs, from a delicate, pungent screenplay by Penelope Gilliatt, and it may be his finest work. A homosexual doctor in his forties, played by Peter Finch, and an employment counsellor in her thirties, played by Glenda Jackson, are both in love with a boyish, successful kinetic sculptor, played by Murray Head, who casually divides his time and affections between them. The film is a curious sort of plea on behalf of human frailty—it asks for sympathy for the non-heroes of life who make the best deal they can. Schlesinger has a gift for pacing and the energy to bring all the elements of a movie together, but he uses his technique so that it's just about impossible for you to have any reaction that he hasn't decreed you should. The film is full of planted insights; you can practically count the watts in the illuminations.—P.K. (A Different Light Bookstore; June 9.)

The Trouble with Harry (1955)—Harry visits a rural Vermont town to reclaim his estranged wife (the fetching young Shirley MacLaine), only to end up dead and buried, and dug up and reburied, and so on; the irony is that he does more good for his spouse (and everyone else) dead than alive. The villagers drawn into the genteel comic skullduggery include a retired sea captain (Edmund Gwenn), a nearsighted country doctor (Dwight Marfield), and a convivial general-store owner (Mildred Dunnock). The director, Alfred Hitchcock, moves from a calendar-art view of the New England setting to a theatrical one, in which everyone makes farcical entrances, and then on to a more spontaneous, cinematic one, in which frogs leap and telltale doors open and shut without warning. John Forsythe is the hero, a virile young painter; as he brings the sea captain together with an unmarried older woman (Mildred Natwick), wins over MacLaine and her young son (Jerry Mathers, later of "Leave It to Beaver"), and even snags a modern cash register for Dunnock, the film becomes a beguiling, funny riff on Ecclesiastes' "To every thing there is a season."—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; June 8.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** June 5-6: "The King of Marvin Gardens" (†) and "Drive, He Said" (1971, Jack Nicholson). . . . June 7-9: "The Conversation" (1974, Francis Ford Coppola). . . . June 10-11: "Scarecrow" (1973, Jerry Schatzberg) and "Payday" (†). . . . **THEATRE 3:** "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy; in French), with Catherine Deneuve.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Films directed by Don Siegel. June 6 at 2:30: "Hound Dog Man" (1959). . . . June 6 at 6 and June 7 at 2:30: "Flaming Star" (1960). . . . June 6 at 8 and June 7 at 6: "Baby Face Nelson" (1957). . . . ¶ June 6 at 3 and 6: "The Hall" (1995, Neven Hitrec) and "730 Days After" (1996, Hitrec). . . . ¶ June 7 at 3: "Harry Callahan" (1993, Judith Wechsler), "Jazz Dance" (1954, Roger Tilton and Richard Leacock), and "Welcome to the Water Planet" (1990, Seth Schneiderman and Maryte Kavaliauskas). . . . ¶ June 7 at 6 and June 10 at 3: "Angel City" (1977, Jon Jost). . . . ¶ A series of films starring Blanche Sweet. June 7 at 8: "Anna Christie" (1923, John Griffith Wray). . . . June 8 at 2 and 5 and June 10 at 2:30: Two different programs of short films. . . . June 9 at 2: "Judith of Bethulia" (1914, D. W. Griffith). . . . June 9 at 5: "The Avenging Conscience" (1914, Griffith). . . . June 10 at 6: "The Warrens of Virginia" (1915, Cecil B. De Mille). . . . ¶ June 7 at 8 and June 11 at 6: "The Russian Idea" (1996, Sergei Selyanov; in Russian). . . . ¶ June 8 at 2:30: "Speaking Directly: Some American Notes" (1974, Jost). . . . ¶ June 8 at 5: "Slow Moves" (1983, Jost). . . . ¶ June 9 at 2:30: "The Black Box" (1992, Tamar Trampe and John Feindt). . . . ¶ June 9 at 5 and June 10 at 6: "Fate" (1994, Fred Keleman). . . . ¶ June 11 at 3: "The Battle of the Rails" (1946, René Clément; in French).

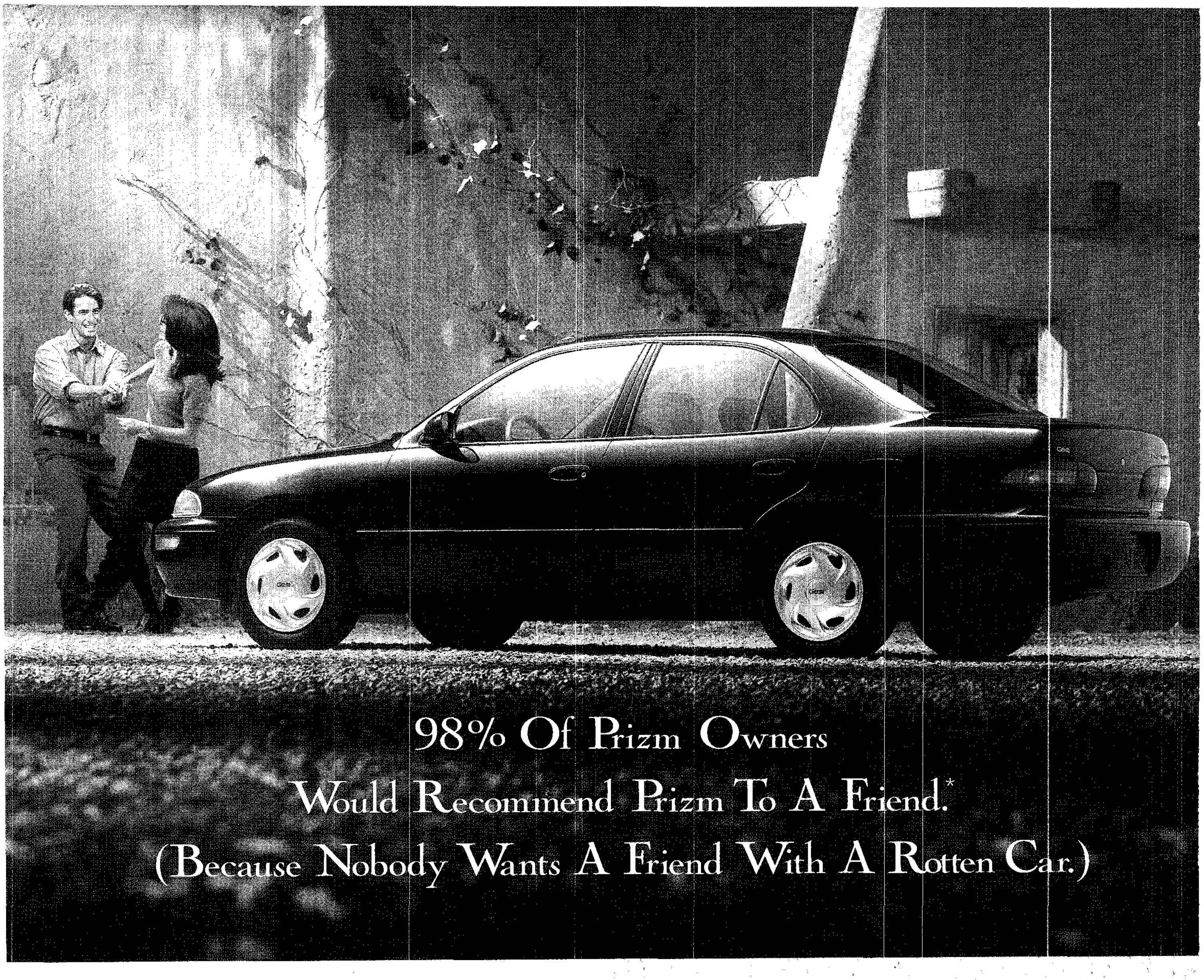
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—June 5 at 2 and 6:15 and June 6 at 4: "Bye Bye Braverman" (†). . . . June 5 at 4 and 9:15 and June 6 at 2: "Homicide" (1991, David Mamet). . . . June 6 at 6:30: "The Killers" (1995, Tanya Hamilton) and "Sudden Manhattan" (1996, Adrienne Shelly). . . . June 6 at 9: "The Distant Journey" (1948, Alfred Radok; in Czech). . . . June 7 at 2, 4:15, 6:30, and 8:45, and June 8 at 4, 6, 8, and 10: Three different programs of films and videos from Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. . . . June 8-9 at 2: "The Five Pennies" (1959, Melville Shavelson). . . . June 9 at 4 and 8:45 and June 10 at 2: "The Dybbuk" (1937, Michael Waszynski; in Yiddish). . . . June 9 at 6:30: "The Jazz Singer" (1927, Alan Crosland). . . . June 10 at 4:30 and 9:15 and June 11 at 2: "August Snow" (1993, Hagai Levi; in Hebrew and Italian). . . . June 10 at 7 and June 11 at 4:14: "Le Golem" (1936, Julien Duvivier; in French).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On June 9 at 7, the feature will be "Sunday Bloody Sunday" (†).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—June 11 at 7: "Meshes of the Afternoon" (1943, Maya Deren) and "La Belle Noiseuse" (†).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—June 8 at 2: "Moonfleet" (1955, Fritz Lang). . . . June 8 at 4: "The Trouble with Harry" (†). . . . June 9 at 2: "Rope" (1948, Alfred Hitchcock). . . . June 9 at 4: "The Big Heat" (1953, Lang).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette Ave. (260-2400)—The Eighth Annual New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, an eleven-day showing of a hundred and sixty-four films and videos from around the world, will be unspooling in the Little Theatre and the Newman Theatre starting June 6 and running through June 16.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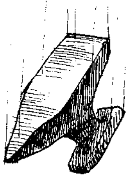
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

WHY IS KENNETH STARR SMILING?

AMONG professionals in politics, the reaction to a misfortune that befalls one's opponent is governed by a law of inverse proportions: the more minor the misfortune—a debate gaffe, or the revelation of some bit of hideous behavior on the part of a campaign co-chairman—the louder one trumpets; the graver the wound, the quieter and more reticent the response. The afternoon that the verdict in the first Whitewater trial came in from Little Rock, the voices from Bob Dole's Washington campaign headquarters would not have been out of place at an Episcopalian funeral. "We're not going to make this an issue in the campaign," one senior Dole man said over the phone. "We believe the campaign is, and should be, about clear and obvious differences on the issues between Bob Dole and Bill Clinton, in such areas as crime, welfare reform, taxes." A few minutes later, another Dole man was on the line: "As you may know, neither Bob Dole nor this campaign has ever made a comment on the Whitewater issue, and we're not going to do so now. We're going to frame this election on the clear differences between Bob Dole and Bill Clinton on the issues of welfare, balancing the budget, crime, and taxes."

The Dole campaign can afford its good manners. Until last week, the Clinton line of defense in Whitewater and related affairs was looking—still, after Webb Hubbell, and Mrs. Clinton's commodities trading, and the mysterious discovery of the long-sought Rose Law Firm billing records in the First Family's living quarters, and the congressional parade of Clinton aides with bad memories, and the nine guilty pleas already won by Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr—not too bad. Democratic efforts to discredit Starr's investigation as politically motivated and devoid of legal merit had met with some success. The leading congressional inquisitor, New York Senator Alfonse D'Amato (who was suffering in home-state polls), had announced with more of a whimper than a bang that he was wrapping up the Banking Committee's two-year investigation. The trial had seemed to go fairly well for the defense; an acquittal, at least on most counts, was expected, followed by the winding down of the Starr investigation.



The news that an Arkansas jury had convicted the Governor of Arkansas and the former business partners of Bill and Hillary Clinton on twenty-four felony counts of fraud and conspiracy changed, to put it mildly, the parameters of the discussion. The question in Whitewater is no longer whether crimes were committed. That has now been proved. The question is, What did Bill and Hillary Clinton know about the crimes, and when did they know it?

Bill Clinton now faces a campaign summer played out against a drumbeat of stories that raise doubts about his character and credibility and pose the greatest threats to his reëlection chances. A revivified Starr will bring his next case to trial on June 17th: Herby Branscum, Jr., and Robert M. Hill, two politically connected bankers in rural Arkansas, are charged with conspiring to defraud the United States, altering bank records, and misapplying bank funds in a scheme allegedly intended to funnel money into Clinton's 1990 gubernatorial campaign. Once again, the President of the United States has been subpoenaed to appear for the defense. The day the trial is to begin is also the day a newly emboldened D'Amato is scheduled to release what will likely be a brutal report on his committee's investigation. Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker faces a new trial, pending review, on separate fraud charges. With a Whitewater grand jury active in Washington and a new one impanelled last month in Little Rock, further indictments are expected.

Bill Clinton

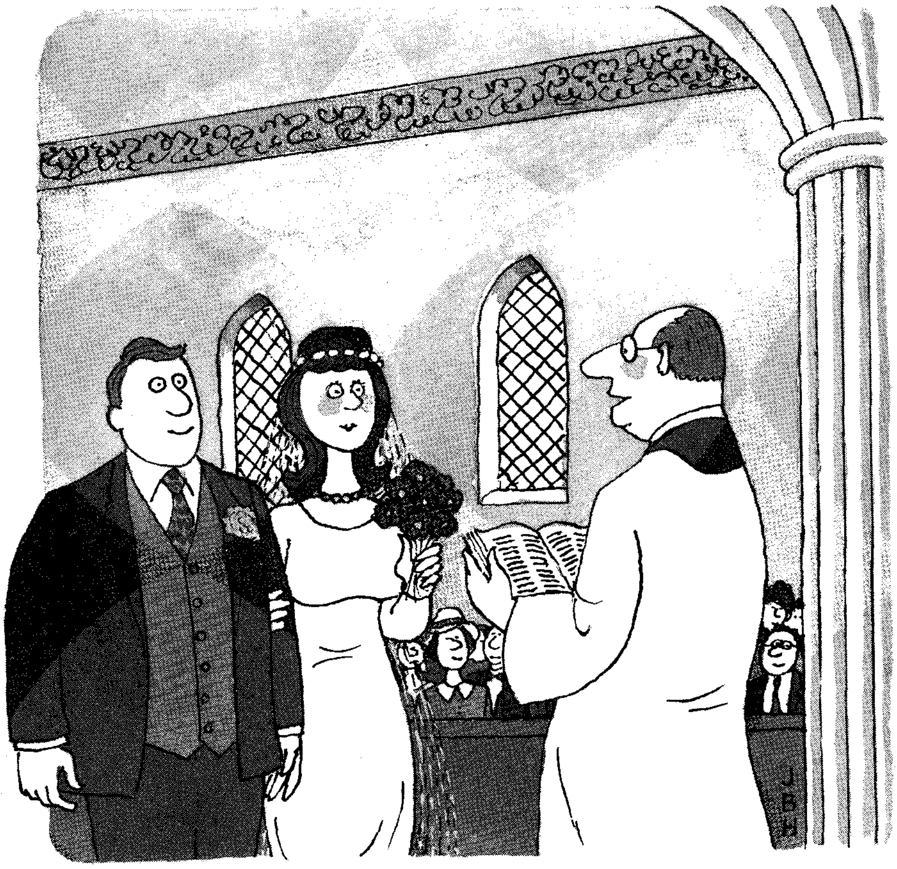
And the legal ramifications are potentially a great deal worse than the political ones. The Clintons' defense has always been that any connection between them and possible illegal acts that may have been committed by James and Susan McDougal was tangential. Just because the Clintons and the McDougals happened to be co-owners of the legitimate Whitewater venture did not mean that the Clintons were connected with the McDougals' illegal activities in other business

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

dealings. Last week's verdict imperilled that defense. The verdict established as fact—proved by the prosecution, backed by documents, and certified by a jury—that some of the money that the McDougals obtained by fraud did indeed end up in Whitewater at a time when the Clintons co-owned the company. The jury found that the McDougals, Tucker, and the Little Rock businessman David Hale had stolen millions of dollars from the Small Business Administration by falsely obtaining federal loans intended for "socially and economically disadvantaged" applicants. One of the fraudulent loans, for three hundred thousand dollars, went to Susan McDougal. Of this three hundred thousand dollars, fifty thousand was funnelled by the McDougals into Whitewater. To put it simply, it has now been proved in a court of law that nearly fifty thousand dollars obtained by defrauding the United States government went into a company that was co-owned by Bill and Hillary Clinton. To build a case against either or both of the Clintons, all Starr has to do now is show that they knew about this illegal transaction when it occurred, or that they later sought to hide evidence of their connection with it from federal or congressional investigators.

Last week's verdict greatly helps Starr in this effort. Tucker and the McDougals have said they will not coöperate with Starr, but he can compel them to give grand-jury testimony by promising them immunity. And, on reflection, Tucker or either of the McDougals might decide that they don't really like the Clintons well enough to do time for them. Susan McDougal, in particular, must be a worry to the Clintons' lawyers. She is forty-one years old, she's looking at a prison term of up to seventeen years, and it appears that she can't stand Hillary. In the McDougals' trial, Hale testified for the prosecution that Clinton had pressured him to make the loan. Clinton testified to the contrary. If Susan McDougal contradicts Clinton's sworn version of events, the President has a problem.

At the White House, the day after the verdict from Little Rock was read, a senior official was musing about the damage done. So far, not so bad, he said. The jurors said that they had found the President believable. Clinton's own overnight polls showed no significant change in the President's favorable ratings—which last week hit the highest of his Administration—and an uptick of only a point or two in the percentage of people who found Whitewater a serious matter. "So, bottom line, I think the effect of this event in and of itself is negligible, both short term and long term," he said. "But you know what I keep thinking about? The face of Starr. Did you see him on TV after the trial? That was the face of a man looking good, looking happy, looking forward to tomorrow. The face of a man looking forward to the next kill."



"I pronounce you husband and wife of opposite sexes."

THE FISHER KING MEETS THE PLAYER

ONE of those roaming hired armies—also known as a movie crew—took over the area in front of the Plaza one evening not long ago to film scenes for a new Whoopi Goldberg movie called "The Associate." On the fringes of the set, an older man wearing a Scottish-style cap arrived on a bike, strode confidently over to the food table, and began eating. Although he didn't actually work for the movie (at least not officially), he seemed welcome; every few minutes, a busy-looking crew member walked by and cheerfully said, "Hey, Radioman!"

"I used to be called Aqualung," the man said, referring to the time when he first started hanging around movie sets, about five years ago. "You know, from the Jethro Tull song? The guy with the seedy clothes and the snot running down his nose, and the greasy fingers, and all that?" These days, he's known as Radioman because he always has a radio dangling from his neck (which at that moment was playing the theme from "Hawaii Five-O"). He's famous among film crews in New York for his encyclopedic knowledge of the local movie business.

After he'd eaten his fill, Radioman (a.k.a. Craig Schwartz) rattled off for anyone who would listen the major movies then shooting in New York ("The Mirror Has Two Faces," "The Preacher's Wife"), where they were shooting (Harlem, Yonkers), the gossip for each, and the schedule for upcom-

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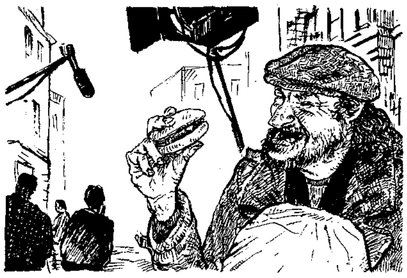
ing films. “People come up to me all the time and say, ‘Radioman, what else is shooting around? You know, we need work,’ ” he said.

Radioman is also a good source for finding out which stars are in town. “He’s got a lowjack on everybody in New York,” Robin Williams said later by phone. Williams, whom Radioman resembles, first met him on the set of “The Fisher King” and still talks to him regularly. “He’ll give you every celebrity’s location at any given moment, and he seems to have their schedule for the day, too,” the actor said. He gets his information by riding from set to set, talking to the crews. And he loves to discuss movies.

“Sidney Lumet, now there’s a wild director for you,” Radioman began, still standing by the food table. “He’s unbelievably fast—one, two, three takes and he’s done, then he goes to another one, bing, bing, bing! If he says he’s gonna be done in three months, he’s done in three months—there’s no pussyfooting around.”



Radioman

Robert De Niro, he reported, is less congenial than, say, Harrison Ford: “De Niro’s not too friendly—he’s into himself, so he doesn’t like to be bothered with anybody.” Also friendly: Woody Harrelson, Brad Pitt, and Pierce Brosnan.

In front of the Plaza, where that night’s scenes were finally getting under way, Patrick Markey, one of the producers of “The Associate,” told of his first encounter with Radioman. “When we started shooting, I didn’t know who he was, so I wanted to kick him off the set,” he said. “But Whoopi intervened and told me to let Radioman go wherever he wanted.” Radioman spent the rest of the night wandering around, talking to the grips and extras and security guards. Everyone wanted to say hello, even the star. In fact, after “The Associate” wrapped, Whoopi presented him with a brand-new Schwinn Classic Cruiser bicycle.

“Every time I turn around, someone’s shoving a hamburger in my hand,” Radioman said. “A lot of times, I’ll just be hanging out on the set, and they’ll say, ‘Radioman, we’ve got a part—you wanna be in it? Stick around.’ And I ain’t goin’ anywhere anyway, so they throw me in a scene here, pay me a few dollars, and feed me. I like that. I love the movies. I’d do anything for them.”

PLAYING UP BABY

IN Washington, sincerity is so routinely denied that it is thought not even to exist. All tears are reptilian, all expressions a mask. The layers of irony and motive are assumed to be so thick and obvious that now even the masses are let in on the secret. “What’s the spin?” Peter Jennings (or any of the anchors) will habitually ask his D.C. correspondents, a question that all are meant to understand as “What lies can we expect to hear now?”

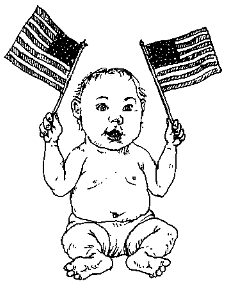
No one’s gestures are more roundly discounted as insincere than those of Hillary Clinton. Last week, in an interview with Walter Isaacson, the managing editor of *Time*, the First Lady said that she and the President “have talked about” adopting a baby and are “talking about it more now.” She added, “I must say we’re hoping that we have another child.” Isaacson, for his part, says that the interview came about at his initiative—the magazine was planning a cover story on children to coincide with the Stand for Children march—that he had raised the issue, and that Mrs. Clinton’s answers seemed to him spontaneous and sincere.

Not so to the President’s political opponents. “Isn’t that wonderful? I’ve already proposed to the Doles that they adopt twins, one black and one white,” said Lyn Nofziger, a former Reagan adviser known these days for his loose-tied appearances on talk shows. “It’s a ten on the cynicism scale. These people are absolutely shameless.”

William Kristol, formerly Dan Quayle’s “brain” and now the editor of *The Weekly Standard*, said he was hoping to line up a “parody memo” in his magazine in which the White House ruminates on the relative merits of adopting a child “from a key state like Michigan, or a Reagan Democrat baby, or maybe a woman baby.” Kristol said the First Lady was showing tendencies of the “ ‘Big Chill’ syndrome,” in which baby boomers cannot quite accept the possibility that an option in life might finally be closed to them. “I feel some sympathy—I just question the idea of sharing it all with *Time* magazine,” Kristol said. “Is there any sentiment not suitable to share with the public?”

Michael Deaver, who used to handle Ronald Reagan’s image, opined that while the First Lady’s remarks might not have been “premeditated or strategic,” she is “a woman whose appearance changes all the time, physically and in all ways.” The Clintons, Deaver said, “are people who are in a constant state of creating an image for themselves. Maybe it will wash. But Ronald Reagan used to say the camera never lies. You can’t be who you aren’t.”

The undertone is obvious: the Clintons, like the victorious characters in Edwin O’Connor’s “The Last Hurrah,” are, at the very least, filling the air with the scent of baby to make the 1996 election a sure thing. Camelot redux: John-John and Caroline crawling under the desk with a nineties twist. Et cetera, et cetera. In fact, the Clintons have discussed having another child for years, and the First Lady has been a prominent advocate of making the adoption process easier for parents. During a visit to Poland, Mrs. Clinton said that she wished she had as many children as Lech Walesa’s wife, who has eight.



Lisa Caputo, Mrs. Clinton’s press secretary, said that she was “absolutely sure” the Clintons would not adopt a child before the election, and when she was asked about any comments questioning the First Lady’s sincerity Caputo assumed a tone of infinite pity. “I think that’s a sad commentary,” she said. “Giving a child a chance is one of the greatest things a person can give to oneself as well as to the child.” ♦

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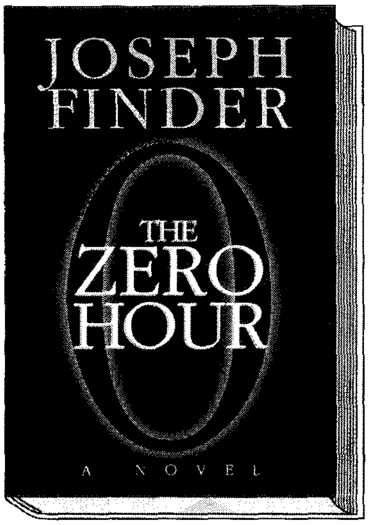

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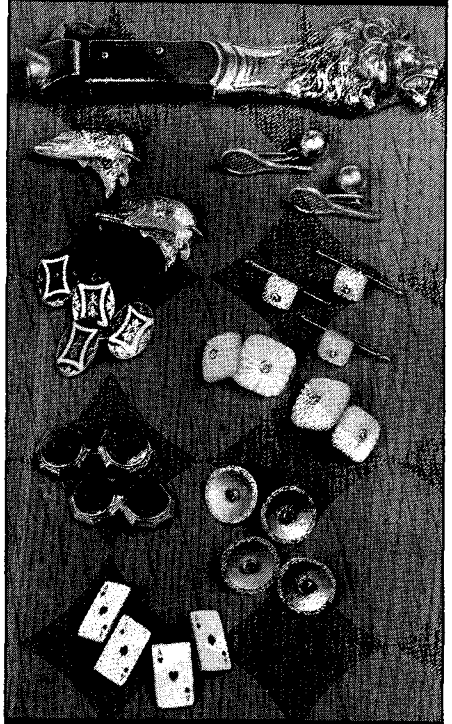

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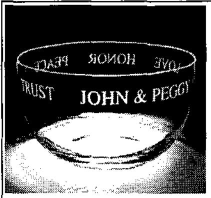

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

ACE IN THE HOLE

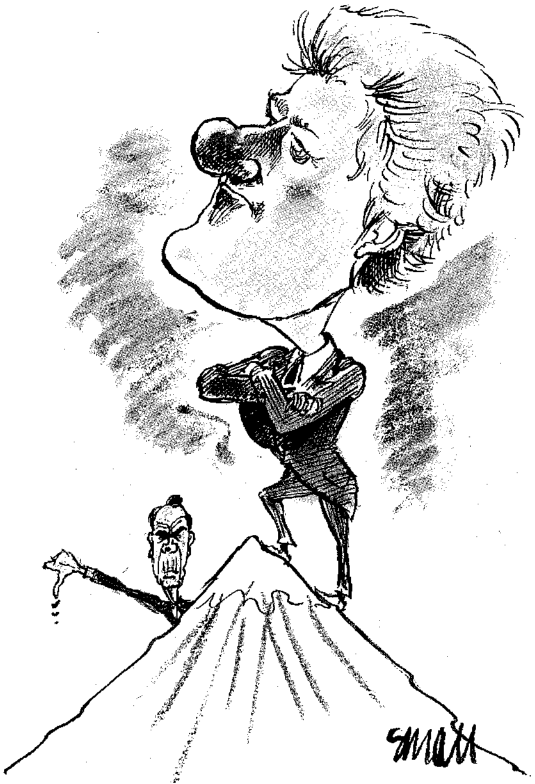
It's been a bad week for Bill Clinton, but on a key issue that nobody thought he could win he is suddenly looking very good.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

It was James Carville, Bill Clinton's fast-talking political consultant, who in 1992 put up a now famous handwritten sign at the Little Rock campaign headquarters saying, "The Economy, Stupid." Actually, as Carville reminded me recently, the sign also contained two other statements—"Change vs. more of the same" and "Don't forget health care"—but it was the first one that captured the moment. Indeed, were it not for the economic malaise that gripped the country in late 1991 and early 1992 we might now be discussing a Quayle-Gore Presidential race.

This time around, the economy looks different, which is excellent news for the White House, although it tends to be overshadowed by more dramatic stories, such as the recent Whitewater convictions. A glance at history confirms the point. Of the sixteen occasions over the past century in which sitting Presidents have run for another term, just five incumbents lost: Taft, Hoover, Ford, Carter, and Bush. The elections of 1912 and 1976 must be seen as anomalies—thanks to Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose campaign and Richard Nixon's Watergate coverup, the incumbent Republican Party self-destructed in those years—which leaves 1932, 1980, and 1992, all years of financial gloom. In 1932 and 1980, the economy was actually in a slump, and in 1992 it was just emerging from a recession the previous year.

Despite some suggestions to the contrary—notably by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank—this year cannot be compared with 1992, let alone 1980 or 1932. In the first quarter of 1996, inflation-adjusted growth in national output, which is the broadest index of economic performance, was 2.3 per cent on an annualized basis; over the full course of the Clinton Administration, such growth has averaged around 2.5 per cent a year. This record is about average for the post-1973 era but well above the growth rate of 1.6 per cent eked out during the Bush Presidency. A number of other measures also suggest that the economy is doing significantly better than it was four years ago: two of the most widely followed are the "misery index," which is the rate of inflation added to the rate of unemployment, and the size of the federal budget deficit.



Message to Bob Dole: It's the economy, stupid.

DAVID SMALL

At the moment, the unemployment rate is 5.4 per cent, and the inflation rate is 2.9 per cent. Added together, these numbers produce a misery index of 8.3, which is an extremely low number. The last year it was lower was 1968, when the unemployment rate was 3.6 per cent and the inflation rate averaged 4.2 per cent. For much of the nineteen-seventies and eighties, the misery index was well into double digits. As recently as 1992, it stood at 10.4.

Perhaps the most important, and least heralded, achievement of the Clinton Administration is the improvement it has wrought in the national finances. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the federal budget deficit for the 1996 fiscal year, which began last October, will be about $145 billion. This is a large number, but it is only half the size of the deficit that the federal government recorded in 1992, which was $290 billion. And these raw numbers don't tell the full story. In ranking budget deficits, economists usually look at them in relation to the size of the economy. Measured in this way, the federal deficit this year will be about 1.9 per cent of the gross domestic product, according to the C.B.O. This figure is down from 4.9 per cent in 1992; indeed, it is the lowest such figure recorded since 1979, the year before Ronald Reagan was elected, when the budget deficit was just 1.7 per cent of G.D.P.

Statistics like these are what prompted President Clinton to make the recent claim, which had all the earmarks of election-year hyperbole, that the United States economy is "the healthiest it's been in three decades." Surprisingly, the President is not the only one making such apparently outlandish statements. In March, DRI/McGraw-Hill, a leading firm of economic consultants, issued a report saying that "normal economic indicators" suggest that the economy "is in its best shape in decades." When I asked David Wyss, the Harvard-trained economist who is the research director of DRI/McGraw-Hill, how he came to make that statement, he explained, "If you look at the economy during the Clinton Administration, you have to say that it's been a success. We have low inflation, full employment, and steady growth. This is really just about the best of all macroeconomic worlds."

To understand how the present economic situation came about, we must go back to a winter morning in Little Rock thirteen days before the Inauguration. On that day, January 7, 1993, the President-elect's entire economic and political team gathered in the Arkansas Governor's Mansion. Leon Panetta, the prospective White House budget director, presented the Bush Administration's final forecast, which had just been released in Washington. It predicted a budget deficit of $305 billion for 1997, an increase of $70 billion over previous estimates. Panetta believed the actual figure could be as high as $360 billion.

By the end of that January day, after six hours of discussions, the nascent Administration had agreed on a course of action that would define the forty-second Presidency. Clinton had been elected on a potentially contradictory platform of tax cuts for the middle class, faster economic growth, and budget-deficit reduction; in Little Rock he decided to sacrifice the first promise and prejudice the second in order to achieve the third.

The result of this decision, following eight months of intense political struggle, was the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, which pledged to reduce the budget deficit by a total of about $500 billion over four years. This would be achieved through a program of about $250 billion in spending cuts and about $250 billion in tax increases.

Given the centrality of the 1993 budget act to the Clinton Administration's record, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to its results. Even some people in the White House are reluctant to discuss the subject, for fear of reminding voters of the 1993 tax increases. This is odd, because the story that has not been told is that the deficit-reduction policy turned out to be far more successful than even its authors had dared hope—a point made to me by Alan Blinder, a Princeton economics professor and a former vice-chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, who was a White House economic adviser during 1993 and 1994. "The real story is that a calculated risk was taken, and in this case it turned out far better than anybody had any reason to expect," Blinder said. "There are plenty of gambles in life that don't turn out well. This is one that turned out extremely well."

It is easy to forget how controversial the deficit-reduction policy was in 1993, even within the White House. Two books about the first year of the Clinton Administration—Bob Woodward's "The Agenda" and Elizabeth Drew's "On the Edge"—portrayed a government

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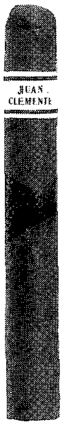

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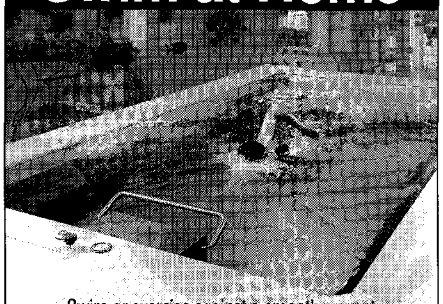

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riven by internal dissension. At various points during that year, Hillary Clinton, George Stephanopoulos, Paul Begala, Stan Greenberg, and Mandy Grunwald all expressed serious doubts about the deficit-reduction strategy. Begala, in particular, complained repeatedly that the White House was "obsessed" with the budget. Even the President himself had mixed feelings. According to Drew, he considered deficit reduction a "rich man's issue," and Woodward says he several times referred to his own budget plan as "a turkey."

The Woodward and Drew books were solid works of reporting, but both essentially stopped at the end of 1993, when the budget act had become law. In terms of how the deficit-reduction policy actually affected the economy, the story only begins then.

The biggest danger back in early 1993 had been that the budget package would tip the economy into another recession. As anyone who suffered through Econ 101 will recall, raising taxes and reducing government spending both tend to reduce the over-all level of demand for goods and services in the economy. President Clinton is a lawyer, not an economist, but he knew enough about the dismal science to see a potential fiasco in the making. "You have to remember that the economy was perceived to be very fragile back then," Gene Sperling, a senior White House economic adviser, recalls. "There was lots of talk about the possibility of a double-dip recession. The President's initial reaction was: If I call for a major fiscal contraction, won't there be a recession?"

At the same time, Republican leaders in Congress were warning of imminent disaster. "I believe this will lead to a recession next year," Newt Gingrich declared following the House vote on the budget package, which ended in a nerve-racking 218–216 victory for the President. "This is the Democrat machine's recession, and each one of them will be held personally accountable."

Even some of the President's economic advisers were worried about the possible impact of the planned spending cuts and tax increases. The economic models they relied on suggested that another slump was unlikely, but the models could not rule out a "growth recession" of the sort that so damaged the Bush Administration. Despite their private fears that history might repeat itself, the economic advisers argued that deficit reduction was the right thing to do—on both theoretical and practical grounds.

The theoretical argument was one that mainstream economists had been making ever since 1981, when Ronald Reagan's tax cuts put the economy on the path to fiscal chaos: budget deficits lead to higher interest rates and lower business investment, and lower investment, in turn, restricts productivity growth and technical progress, which are the keys to future prosperity. Laura D'Andrea Tyson, the Berkeley professor who headed the White House Council of Economic Advisers, repeated this argument to Clinton but coupled it with a more immediate argument: budget deficits not only do long-term damage but can lead to disastrous financial panics in the short or medium term, and these panics, which have stricken many developing countries, occur when investors lose faith in the political system.

From the perspective of mid-1996, it may sound unrealistic to suggest that the United States Treasury could ever experience such a crisis of confidence, but back in 1992 perceptions were different. In the twelve years since Reagan's election, the amount of outstanding federal debt had risen, from $909 billion to more than $4 trillion. Even allowing for growth in the economy, that rise was dramatic. The total federal debt as a percentage of G.D.P. had risen between 1980 and 1992 from 34.4 per cent to 67.6 per cent, and it seemed to be on an inexorable upward trend. "We all attached some not insignificant probability to a scenario of financial-market instability if we didn't take a credible position on the deficit," Tyson told me. "Given the growth of total debt relative to output, there really was a danger that at some point—nobody could know when—the United States could hit a confidence problem."

BILL CLINTON didn't need much convincing that budget deficits were bad, but he did need a good deal of reassurance that doing something about them wouldn't wreck his chances of reëlection. In making a practical case for deficit reduction, his advisers relied primarily on one of the institutions that the Democratic candidate had railed against in his populist attack on the Reagan-Bush years: the Wall Street bond market.

Their argument was that deficit reduction needn't necessarily be a drag on the economy, as Econ 101 models suggest, because these simple models ignore the effect a credible fiscal plan can have on the bond market. If bond traders could be persuaded that the planned budget cuts were real, they would bid down long-term interest rates, and the decline in rates would provide a boost to the economy which would at least partly offset the proposed higher taxes and lower government spending. The key thing to understand, as the experts explained to the President-elect, was that the long-term interest rate is determined not by the government but by the bond market; in fact, it is basically equal to the nominal coupon on a thirty-year bond divided by the bond's market price, so anything that raises bond prices also reduces long-term interest rates. There was a sequel to the story. If, in addition to the favorable bond-market reaction, the Federal Reserve's response to the budget package was to cut short-term interest rates, which are under its control, then deficit reduction might not slow the economy at all.

When this scenario was laid out for the President-elect in Little Rock, it did not go down well, as Woodward recorded: "At the President-elect's end of the table, Clinton's face turned red with anger and disbelief. 'You mean to tell me that the success of the program and my reëlection hinges on the Federal Reserve and a bunch of fucking bond traders?' he responded in a half whisper. Nods from his end of the table. Not a dissent."

Clinton's advisers were well aware that relying on the bond market was a high-risk strategy: traders might ignore the budget package, or dismiss it as another Washington gimmick. "We all believed in the direction of the argument, but even the models themselves were uncertain about the size of the effects and how fast they would occur," Tyson recalls. "There was a range of estimates."

In order to provide an alternative short-term stimulus to the economy, the White House proposed an immediate $16 billion program of public investments. "People called it old-fashioned Democratic spending, but it was really done as an insurance policy," Sperling explains. Congress killed the stimulus package, however, leaving the advisers in the White House ever more beholden to Wall Street, a place few of them knew well.

The one senior official who knew a lot about bond markets was Robert Rubin, the head of the newly created National Economic Council, for he had only recently left Goldman, Sachs, the highly profitable investment-banking and securities firm, after twenty-six years. Rubin, who later succeeded Lloyd Bentsen as Treasury Secretary, was a passionate believer in deficit reduction; indeed, he saw it as a "threshold issue," which had to be dealt with before anything else positive could happen to the Administration. But even he was far from certain how his former colleagues would react to the budget package. "We'd seen a long period during which the political process had not dealt with the deficit," Rubin explained to me recently. "Given the very high level of skepticism in the markets about the willingness of the system to make tough decisions, it was unclear how long it would take before the market gave us credit for deficit reduction. There was at least the possibility that the skepticism would last much longer than we projected, in which case it could have upended our program."

In the event, the bond market's reaction to the Clinton fiscal plan was remarkably positive. In the twelve months following Clinton's election, long-term interest rates tumbled from 7.75 per cent to a low of 5.78 per cent—the lowest level since the Treasury started selling thirty-year constant-maturity bonds, in 1977. After spiking up sharply in 1994, as the Fed raised short-term rates, long-term rates fell back down, and they have stayed low ever since. At the moment, they are still under seven per cent, which is remarkable for an economy that is in its fifth year of recovery, with unemployment at 5.4 per cent.

It is one of the richest ironies of recent years that the much maligned bond traders, acting entirely in their own interest, bailed out a Democratic Administration that was fighting to raise their marginal tax rates sharply. In the White House, officials watched the action on Wall Street with surprise and delight. "The markets gave credibility to this program more rapidly than folks had

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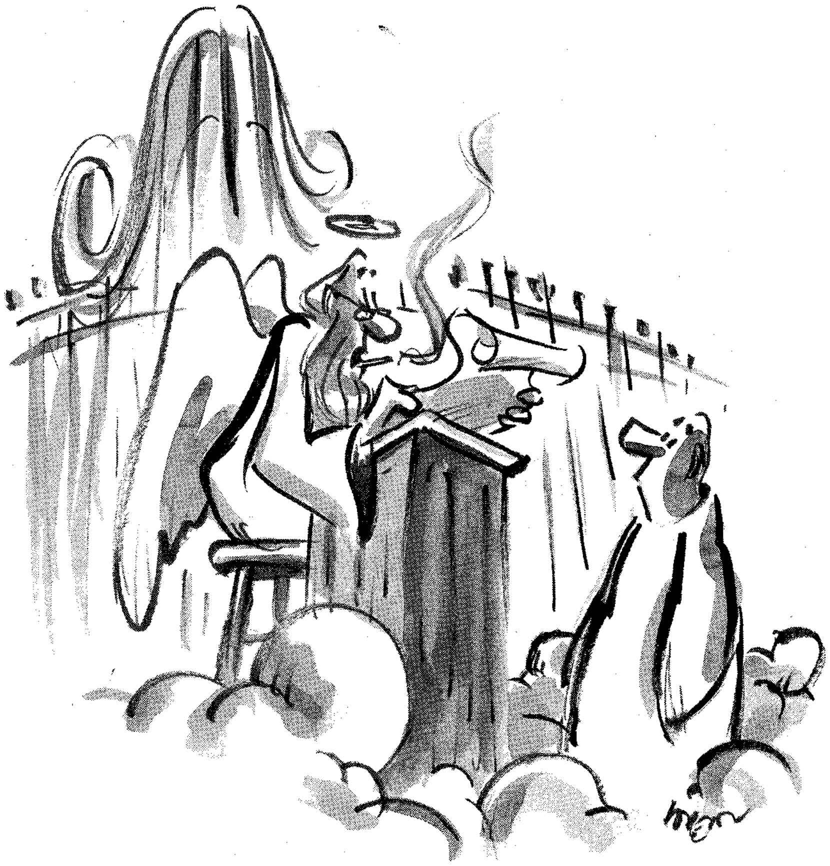


“What about all those nasty cracks you made about Philip Morris?”

expected—and, frankly, more rapidly than I had expected,” Rubin says. Even Blinder, who had presented the bond-market argument to the President-elect in Little Rock, was stunned. “I never thought we’d get the bond rate down to 5.8 per cent,” he now admits. “I don’t think any of us thought it would get that low. If you’d polled economists back then and said we’re going to drive the long-term interest rate below six per cent, I don’t think one in a thousand would have believed you.”

With interest rates so low, the economy grew at a rate that made a mockery of the Republicans’ dire predictions. In 1994, the first year the deficit package started to bite, the economy expanded by a healthy 3.5 per cent. In 1995, growth fell back to two per cent, but current indications are that it will be back around 2.5 per cent this year.

The easiest way to trace the impact of the falling interest rates is to look at the path of investment, the type of spending most responsive to the cost of credit. Business investment has grown by eleven per cent a year since 1993, which, as Tyson points out, is the highest rate of growth since the Kennedy Administration. As a percentage of G.D.P., investment rose from 12.7 per cent in 1992 to 14.8 per cent in 1994. Much of this extra capital spending has gone into high technology, and especially into computers and telecommunications equipment—areas in which American companies now lead the world. Whether this upturn in investment will lead to a higher rate of productivity growth throughout the economy is unclear—the results so far are somewhat disappointing—but it is precisely what economists of all political hues have been recommending for more than a decade. “I remember saying very clearly in the first year that what this is all about is shifting resources toward interest-sensitive private spending,” Tyson says. “That is exactly what has happened.”

Bob Dole’s difficulties in constructing an effective critique of Clinton’s economic policies are obvious. (After building a considerable reputation for fiscal rectitude in the Senate, he is now said to be mulling throwing it away by proposing an across-the-board reduction in income-tax rates.) As a matter of logic, the Republicans have only two alternatives: to say that things are not as good as they seem or to say that things are as good as they seem but Clinton has nothing do with it. Earlier this year, Dole seemed to be veering toward the first approach. Speaking in New Hampshire on February 13th, he said, “Corporate profits are setting records, but so are corporate layoffs. And middle-class families feel less and less secure about the future. There is a wide and growing gap between what the government’s statistics say about our economy and how American families feel about it.”

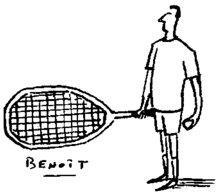
It struck me that these words could have been spoken by Carville, by his colleague Begala, or by Labor Secretary Robert Reich. All of them have put a similar argument to me in recent months, and there is clearly some truth in it. Wages for middle-income households have been stagnant since the mid-nineteen-seventies, and the over-all inequality of income and wealth has risen sharply. These long-term problems have not been solved by the Clinton Administration, and they will continue to plague the country long after November’s election. The sad fact is that they are so deeply rooted in the way capitalism is evolving that no Presidential candidate—and certainly not a Republican believer in laissez-faire—is in any position to offer a credible remedy in just four years.

Thus, it was always going to be problematical for Dole to pursue a Reichian line for long. Predictably, once Pat Buchanan was safely in his rearview mirror he eased up on the populist pedal. There may be sound political as well as personal reasons for his switch of tactics. Although the country does face serious problems, there is evidence that most Americans are more upbeat about the economy than Buchanan believes they are. This spring, Frank Newport and Lydia Saad, two top editors of the Gallup poll, published a little-noticed article in *The Public Perspective* addressing the widespread belief that the electorate is still in a funk about the economy. Their conclusion: “When compared to four years ago, Americans’ current take on the economy and their personal finances is noticeably bright and certainly suggests that . . . incumbent Bill Clinton is in a much better position vis-à-vis reëlection than was George Bush four years ago."

At least three of Gallup's findings are worth mentioning. In January of this year, just fourteen per cent of those polled—down from forty-two per cent in 1992—identified the economy as the most pressing problem facing the country. In March, when Gallup asked people to describe business conditions in their own community, seventy-one per cent said local conditions were "good" or "very good"—a number as high as any recorded since 1961. In the same poll, fifty per cent said they were financially better off than a year previously—up from twenty-nine per cent in June of 1993. In interpreting this finding, Newport and Saad wrote, "Americans are as likely to claim that they are 'better off financially' than they have been at any point at which the comparable questions have been asked since 1976."

If doom and gloom won't work against Clinton, what will? One person who might have the answer is Martin Feldstein, a Harvard professor of economics who was the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under Ronald Reagan. Feldstein, who is acting as an informal adviser to Dole, recommends the second option open to the Republican candidate: admit that the economy is doing well but tell the voters that Bill Clinton has nothing to do with it. Shortened to two words, Feldstein's argument could be expressed like this: Alan Greenspan.

"I think that the good performance of the economy can be attributed primarily to the Federal Reserve," Feldstein told me recently from his home, in Belmont, Massachusetts. "Having set the goal of low inflation back in the early nineteen-eighties, they have really stuck to it. That is the principal reason interest rates have come down, and why we have had this long recovery. If you put Saddam Hussein aside, we've been in recovery since 1982. That's where I put the credit, rather than in the tax bill of 1993."



According to Feldstein, whose ideas are likely to figure prominently in Dole's campaign, the lower interest rates induced by Greenspan's policies can also explain most of the budget-deficit reduction that has taken place in the past three years. "If you take the reduction from $290 billion to $145 billion this year, Bill Clinton can indeed say he cut the deficit in half as promised," Feldstein said. "But you can actually explain most of that by the recent decline in unemployment and the rise in economic activity. Only about forty billion of the deficit reduction has been structural."

To support his case, Feldstein and a colleague recently published a research paper arguing that the 1993 tax increase on high-income earners raised less than half as much revenue as the Treasury Department had predicted. The paper covered only the 1993 fiscal year, and the Treasury responded by arguing that the tax shortfall was only temporary, but Feldstein says he is confident that when the data become available the same result will hold up for later years. "In my experience with tax changes, people who don't want to believe the results always say they are temporary," he said.

Feldstein's arguments are open to question, particularly his explanation for the sharp fall in interest rates. It is true that the Fed has been pursuing a counter-inflation policy since the early years of Paul Volcker's reign as chairman (1979-87), but long-term interest rates did not dip below seven per cent until early 1993, when the Clinton deficit-reduction package appeared likely to become a reality. At that point, Greenspan had not altered short-term interest rates in almost two years.

Alan Blinder, the former Clinton adviser, points out that when the President's deficit-reduction program was being discussed, long-term interest rates fell by two percentage points even as the Fed was holding steady. "Furthermore," he adds, "you could see that the cadence of the fall had to do with the budget package. In the late spring and early summer, when the budget looked shaky, interest rates stopped falling. Then the budget passed in August and interest rates plummeted."

Officials in the White House were well aware of how closely their actions were being monitored in the bond market. On one occasion, Lloyd Bentsen suggested on "Meet the Press" that the deficit-reduction package might include an energy tax, as it eventually did. The very next day, bond prices soared, and interest rates dropped to a six-year low. Bentsen was so impressed by the market

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reaction that he clipped a report from the *Wall Street Journal* and read it aloud at a meeting of the National Economic Council, in the Roosevelt Room.

Feldstein's dismissal of the budget deficit as not being "structural" is also questionable. When professional economists speak of "structural budget deficits," they are not referring to the deficit number that dominates public discussion. The publicly discussed deficit number goes up during economic downturns, when tax payments fall, and down in boom times, when tax payments rise. Structural deficits, by contrast, are calculated by stripping out these cyclical effects, so that the underlying relationship between taxes and spending can be seen regardless of where the economy is positioned in the economic cycle. According to Feldstein, the structural deficit has dropped by at most $40 billion since 1992, and most of the $145 billion fall in the over-all deficit is due to the economic upturn.

An independent arbiter, the Congressional Budget Office, which regularly estimates the structural deficit, found otherwise. According to the C.B.O.'s latest calculations, published last month, the structural deficit fell from $224 billion in 1992 to $154 billion in 1996. These numbers imply that $70 billion—or slightly less than half—of the total fall in the budget deficit since 1992 was caused by the 1993 deficit-reduction package, and slightly more than half was due to the economic recovery.

While the $70 billion estimate is much larger than Feldstein's $40 billion figure, it may actually understate the real impact of the Clinton package—a point I was reminded of by the independent economic forecaster David Wyss. According to his calculations, if the 1993 deficit-reduction bill had not been passed the structural deficit would have grown and would now be about $100 billion higher than it actually is.

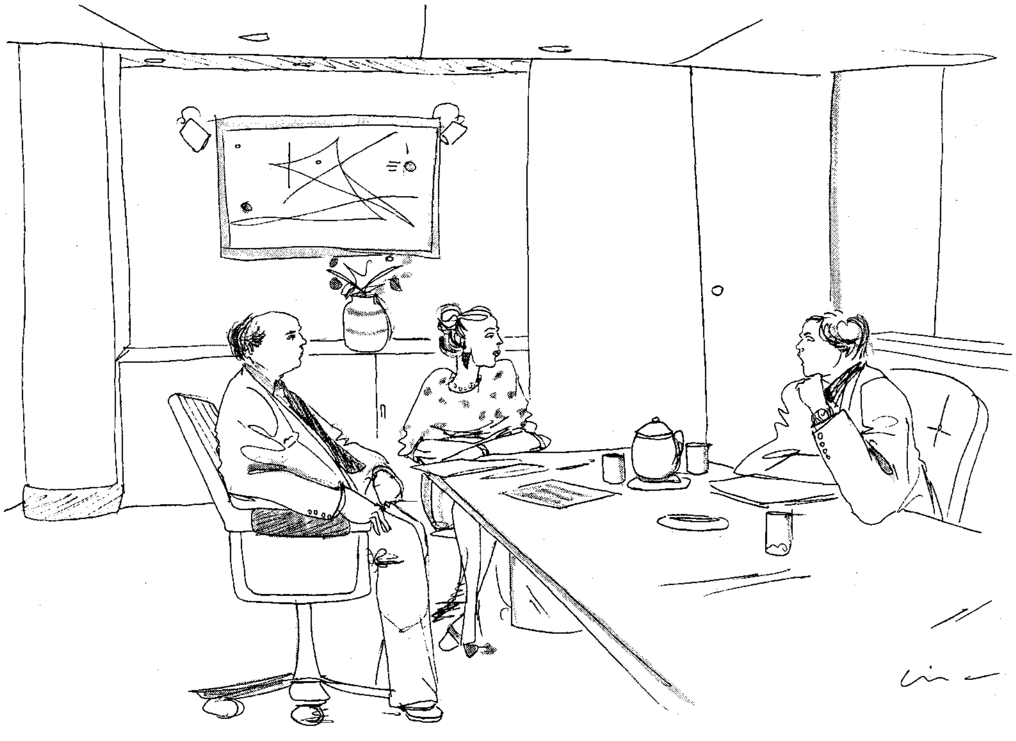
Wyss also made another point that is often overlooked in the current debate about the budget deficit. "We complain about it, and we should complain about it, but the fact is we now have the lowest budget deficit relative to G.D.P. of any of the major industrial nations," he said. When I looked up the official figures in the semiannual *O.E.C.D. Economic Outlook*, published by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Coöperation and Development, I found that Wyss was correct. According to the O.E.C.D. projections, the United States structural deficit in 1996 will be about 1.7 per cent of G.D.P. The estimated deficits for Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom are 2.7 per cent, 2.4 per cent, and 2.5 per cent, respectively. The biggest developed economy I could find with a lower structural deficit than that of the United States was that of Australia.

There is yet another important statistic that is rarely mentioned in the public debate. For the past two years, the United States Treasury has been collecting more money in revenue than Congress has been spending, not counting interest payments on the national debt. Economists refer to this situation as the government running a "primary surplus." What it means is that if we didn't have to service the vast debts run up during the past fifteen years the budget would now be balanced.

Both Alan Greenspan and his predecessor, Paul Volcker, have gone on the record to praise the 1993 package. "I don't think there is any doubt that the package was part of an honest effort to reverse the trend of the budget deficit," Volcker told me. "I wouldn't call it particularly structural, in the sense that it didn't involve any constructive changes in the tax system, and it certainly didn't resolve the entitlements problem, but it was an honest-to-goodness attempt to come to grips with the budget deficit."

ONE of the minor mysteries of the current political constellation is why, when deficit reduction is the unquestioned mantra of the moment, President Clinton doesn't get more public credit for reducing the deficit. Unsurprisingly, this infuriates James Carville. "The people who are never called to the bar of justice are all those who said when the President's economic program was passed that it was going to be a disaster!" he shouted on the phone to me. "If people were put on trial for economic stupidity, these people who said the plan would cause hardship would all be felons!"

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, one of those criticizing the budget package was Begala, a former colleague of Carville's. Begala no longer works for the White House, but when I tracked him down, in Texas, he was unapologetic about his stand back in 1993. "If reduced to their core, the arguments were these," he said. "The economic advisers saying, 'Do this, because it will be good for the economy.' The political ad-



"What I'm proposing is this. No."

visers saying, 'If you do this it will hurt us politically.' I think history has proved us both right." Given the disastrous results for the Democrats of the 1994 midterm elections, even some of President Clinton's economic advisers concede the point. Gene Sperling said, "The Republicans, by being so repetitious with their 'largest tax increase in history' line, were able to reinforce a definition which people already had of Democrats. So it's hard to look back and say the political advice had no merit."

On the other hand, as Sperling and others point out, the 1993 deficit-reduction package produced a variety of long-term benefits that are only now paying off. "We are going into 1996 with a level of achievement that we could never have had if we had not done this," Sperling said. "Also, the fact that we have brought down the budget deficit puts us in a far better position to protect ourselves against the more severe kind of stuff that the Republicans can throw at us."

One of these will be the charge that the President, through his political maneuvering during the past twelve months, scuttled the chances of a bipartisan agreement to balance the budget by the year 2002. Another will be that he has done little to head off the mother of all fiscal crises, which is due to arrive in about fifteen years, when the baby boomers start to turn sixty-five. Both points have merit, and Paul Volcker, for one, believes the President's heart is no longer in deficit reduction. "They're now playing it politically," he said. "You get into this silly business about whether you balance the budget in ten years or eleven years or seven years. It's all never-never land."

These criticisms, while important, do not detract from the policy decisions taken by the President during his first year in office; without the 1993 deficit-reduction package, balancing the budget would not be even a remote possibility. In fact, as Robert Rubin pointed out, without the 1993 package the whole political and economic landscape would look quite different. "We would have continued to have abnormally high interest rates, and that would have choked off the recovery," he told me.

When I asked Rubin why, with all his Wall Street experience, he thought the markets had reacted so positively, his reply was a modest one. "I don't know the answer, other than that I know that the President was totally committed to doing this, and he managed to convey that commitment to the American people—and, more important in this case, to the markets—in ways that they believed," he said. Volcker made a similar point. "I think the market had some confidence and satisfaction that this guy came in and took on the budget deficit as a major priority," he said. "The feeling goes beyond the particular budget numbers."

Rubin's image of Bill Clinton as a commanding leader who makes tough decisions and sticks with them through good times and bad is not one that gels in the popular imagination, but it was also evoked by Alan Blinder and Gene Sperling. "I was amazed at how committed he was to going for a substantial deficit reduction, even when he saw some of the ugly things that you had to do to the budget to get there," Blinder said. "Basically, he didn't flinch."

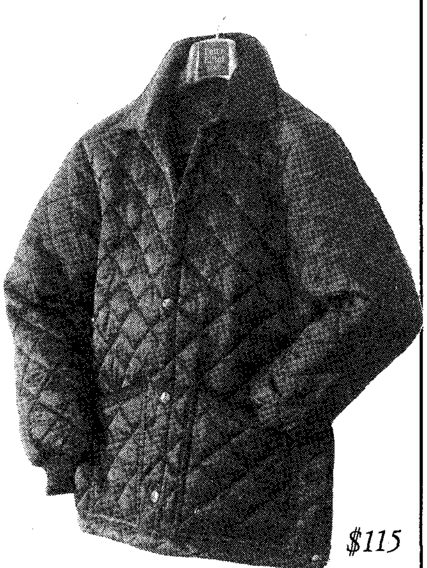
Sperling praised the President even more highly. "For us on the economic team, we will always think of him as a good decision-maker," he told me. "When he had hard choices to make, on both the deficit and NAFTA, he listened to everybody for a few days, then he made the call and never looked back."

I reminded Sperling of the passages in Woodward's book where the President berated his own advisers and complained about turning the government over to Wall Street interests. Surely these stories were true, I suggested.

"Yes," Sperling conceded. "Just like any of us, he felt pain at times when things weren't going his way. But Woodward missed the bigger picture, which was that Clinton did what virtually no President had done before. The real issue is that it was a very good, effective deficit-reduction plan."

After talking to Sperling, I reread Woodward's description of a meeting between Clinton and his economic advisers on April 7, 1993. It goes as follows: " 'Where are all the Democrats?' Clinton bellowed. 'I hope you're all aware we're all Eisenhower Republicans here, and we are fighting the Reagan Republicans. We stand for lower deficits and free trade and the bond market. Isn't that great?' "

No, not great, but perhaps it's what the country needed after a decade of Reaganomics. ♦



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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

BEHIND THE TIMES

While the Sulzbergers grapple with the issue of succession, other questions arise about the future direction of their newspaper.

BY KEN AULETTA

ON the morning of April 16th, Arthur Ochs (Punch) Sulzberger, the chairman and chief executive officer of the New York Times Company, anxiously prepared for the company's annual shareholder meeting, scheduled to begin at nine-thirty in Town Hall: he put on a navy-blue suit and traded his customary bold-striped shirt for a white one. He was very likely more nervous than usual; Sulzberger had just turned seventy, and in the past several months he had been avoiding inquiries about succession plans at the *Times*, the world's most influential newspaper. At Town Hall, as he climbed the steps to the stage, he was followed by four members of his executive team, including Lance R. Primis, the president and chief operating officer. Sulzberger introduced the *Times* directors, who sat in the first row, and his three sisters, also directors, who sat together in the second row. He smiled at his new wife, Allison Stacey Cowles (he had married her in March), who sat in the eighth row, beside Arthur, Jr., his son and the publisher of the *Times*. He read from a text, and when he was finished a shareholder rose to ask questions and concluded by complimenting him on the twenty-nine years he had served as publisher and the twenty-three years he has presided over the entire company. Punch Sulzberger looked pleased.

His pleasure lasted but a few moments, for he spotted Evelyn Y. Davis, the corporate gadfly and publisher of a newsletter sent only to C.E.O.s, moving toward a floor microphone. As soon as she seized it, she behaved as if everyone in the audience were an employee of hers.

"Yes, Punch, good morning. I am Evelyn Y. Davis, editor of *Highlights & Lowlights*," she said loudly. She then went straight to the question that Sulzberger had avoided—the one that everybody who works at the *Times* had been wanting to ask, and the one that he himself probably didn't know the answer to. "What is being done here about the orderly succession?" she asked. "Sometime, Punch, I'm sure you want to retire. And the choice of who is going to be the crown prince is not clear at all. Of course, you had the article in the *Wall Street Journal*." (On January 22nd, the *Journal* published a front-page story about "a potentially bruising competition" to succeed Sulzberger.) "But I have been at this game for over thirty years, and nobody knows corporate demands better than Evelyn Y. Davis, whether you like me or not."

After a brief digression, Davis returned to the question. "Now, we have here no clear-cut succession, and I would like to recommend His Royal Highness Prince Arthur, Jr., and His Royal Highness Prince Michael Golden." As she mentioned their names, she bowed toward Sulzberger's son, who was seated on the right aisle of the eighth row, and then toward Sulzberger's nephew Michael Golden, the corporate vice-president for operations development, who was seated on the left aisle of the seventh row, and she said, "Just what is the board doing about the subject of succession and your eventual retirement?"

Shifting uncomfortably, Sulzberger responded, "That is a topic—as you know, since you quoted the *Wall Street Journal*—that is being bandied around. It is a topic of concern at the New York *Times*. And I have discussed it with my directors, and at the appropriate time, when a few pieces fall into place, I will be further discussing it with them, and we'll have a constructive plan."

"Let's suppose you are on a trip in Asia somewhere," Davis said. "Who is maybe in charge?"

"My colleague over here, Mr. Primis, president of the organization."

"Is he also being considered for the top job?"

"I'm not going to discuss what I'm going to do."

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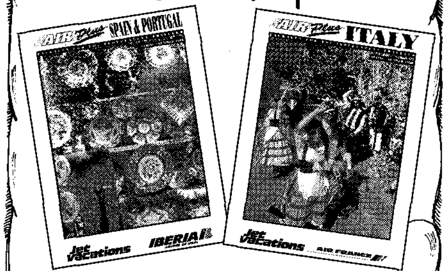

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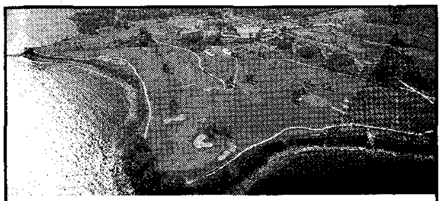

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Cartouche spells Joan
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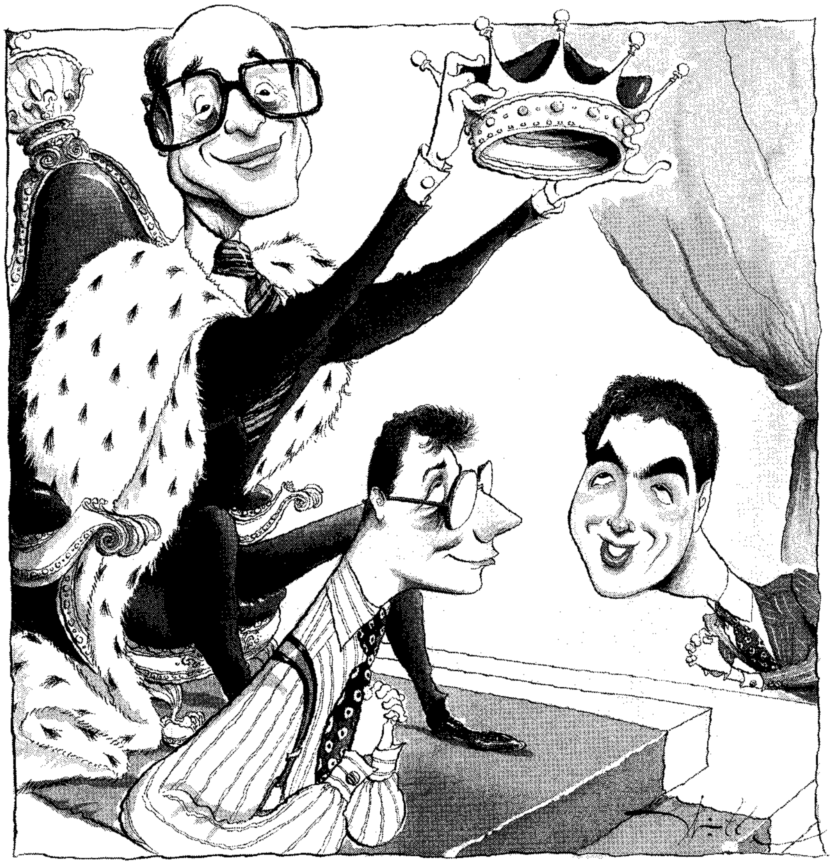
Davis's questions mutated into a speech, and she urged Sulzberger to encourage a contest among the three men, by inviting each to serve on the board, and "let the best man win." Most shareholders groaned, and others laughed. The three Sulzberger sisters sat stone-faced, shoulders squared, eyes trained straight ahead. "Oh, no," Marian Heiskell, one of Punch's sisters, said when Davis seized the microphone for the fifth or sixth time. Her brother looked stricken, but was so polite that even Davis was seduced by his shy affability. She rose one last time—to praise him, saying, "Finally, Punch, I think you did a very nice job at this annual meeting." The meeting then adjourned.



Punch Sulzberger with the contenders to the throne: his son, Arthur, Jr., and his nephew Michael Golden. What offends the clan is the suggestion that they are all pitted against each other.

MICHAEL WITTE

APART from some complaining stockholders (Times Company stock has been a disappointment to investors), the Sulzberger family has few detractors. The company, while it is a public corporation, more closely resembles a monarchy. Punch Sulzberger and his sisters hold around eighty-five per cent of the company's Class B controlling stock. And though the directors now ask more questions than they once did, the family still rules.

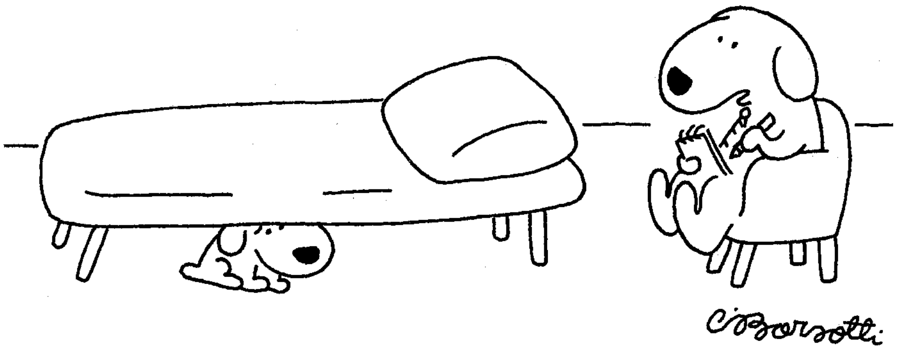
This August will mark the family's hundredth year of *Times* ownership, and between now and then the city will be rife with celebrations. A gala dinner will be held on June 26th at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Modern Art, the Pierpont Morgan Library, and the New York Public Library will commemorate the centennial. These hundred years have seen only three heads of the *Times* besides Punch Sulzberger: Adolph S. Ochs, his grandfather; Arthur Hays Sulzberger, his father; and Orvil E. Dryfoos, the husband of his sister Marian. It was in 1963, after Dryfoos's death, that Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, Punch Sulzberger's mother, elevated her son—then a mere assistant to the *Times*' general manager—to the role of its publisher. She did so with the usual family admonition: "No swelled heads."

During the past hundred years, a single leader of the Sulzberger clan was always able to anoint a successor. But Punch Sulzberger, unlike his mother, his father, or his grandfather, must act in concert with the three sisters. "When Punch was chosen, there was only one male in the family," one of the cousins told me. "Now there are lots of them"—a reference to the four male cousins who, along with one female cousin, hold executive positions at the Times Company. Even if he wants to choose Arthur, Jr. (and those who know the company chairman believe he does), his sisters may not.

All three of Iphigene Sulzberger's daughters have children who work at the company: Ruth S. Holmberg, the chairman of the Times Printing Company and a former publisher of the Chattanooga *Times*, is the mother of Michael Golden, who was recently elevated from the New York Times Magazine Division to a senior corporate vice-presidency, and her elder son, Stephen Golden, is a vice-president in charge of the company's Forest Products Group; Judith P. Sulzberger, a doctor at the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, has a son, Daniel H. Cohen, who is a vice-president in advertising sales; and Marian Heiskell, who is active in numerous charities, has a daughter, Susan W. Dryfoos, who directs the Times History Project. If Punch Sulzberger has a plan for succession, it remains a secret kept from both his friends and his board. "We've discussed discussing succession, but we haven't had a real conversation about succession," says Donald M. Stewart, the president of the College Board and a Times Company director for ten years, who sees no reason to rush.

Sulzberger's friends and associates can only guess when he plans to step down, but they agree that if he wants his son to succeed him as chairman and C.E.O. he will need some time to put such a plan into effect. "Punch keeps his own counsel about everything," one friend said. "Obviously, he wants his own son to get a real run at it."

Perhaps because of potential family divisions, there is strife within the company. Corporate officers occasionally mock the "dinosaurs" who edit the paper, and Lance Primis is often pitted against his boss's son. Primis, who turns fifty this month, wears dark suits and parts his graying hair neatly; Sulzberger, Jr., who is forty-four, wears gray plaid double-breasted suits and has somewhat wayward curly hair. "Arthur can't do anything about the fact that he looks like an English gentleman," a friend explained. Nor can Primis alter the fact that he sometimes behaves like the formal



"And what do you think will happen if you do get on the couch?"

• •

man that Sulzberger only appears to be.

Allies of Arthur, Jr., have blamed Primis or his allies for hints in the *Wall Street Journal's* January story that Arthur, Jr., was a troglodyte. If Primis didn't talk to the *Journal*, "then someone close to him did," a supporter of Arthur, Jr., said. Primis, Brooklyn-born and somewhat arch, and Arthur, Jr., Mount Kisco-born and wisecracking, were once close, and had offices in the same suite after Arthur was named publisher and Primis worked for him, as his general manager. When Primis was promoted, four years ago, their relationship cooled. The tension between the two men is much talked about at the upper levels of the *Times*, and even among Punch Sulzberger's friends. "I hear their relationship is very, very bad," one friend says. "Which is strange to me. Why would Lance set up a hostile relationship with someone who will be so influential?"

Not surprisingly, internal battles at the company are an awkward subject for Punch Sulzberger—and for the newspaper. What offended the Sulzberger clan about the *Journal* account was—as Arthur, Jr., noted in response to a question from a *Times* employee at an annual meeting—the suggestion that the family members were "all pitted against each other." The fact is, though, that Arthur, Jr., and Michael Golden are friendly, talk regularly and easily, and were scheduled to go scuba diving in April with their cousins Dan Cohen and Stephen Golden. (At the last minute, Michael had a conflict and couldn't go.) To insure continued family harmony, this generation of Sulzbergers, who call themselves the cousins, gather at least once a year to talk business, and they socialize regularly. "I think family structures are always complicated," Ruth Holmberg said. "But there's a great feeling of affection for one another among the next generation."

Nevertheless, as Evelyn Davis suggested, at least two of the cousins—Arthur, Jr., and Michael Golden—would like to be chairman of the company. Friendly they may be, but they are nonetheless rivals. According to family members and intimates, one or more of the sisters is likely to insist that Golden and Arthur, Jr., split the three top jobs—chairman, C.E.O., and publisher—between them. A messy battle is possible. "I can imagine it," an important family member told me, with a sigh. "But we work hard to avoid it, and so far we've been successful." To keep from placing new burdens on this unity, the senior Sulzberger declined to be interviewed for this article. Following his lead, some other members of the Sulzberger family and of the Times Company refused to say anything; still others spoke anonymously. The resolution of the quandary is not, however, merely an intramural matter. At various levels of the newspaper, one encounters fear about whether the Old Gray Lady will, like other newspapers, place more emphasis on her stock price and her profits than on her product. And there is a larger fear that the family might not eventually agree. "That would be a disaster," a top executive at the company told me. "That would be the end of the paper."

PUNCH SULZBERGER, the youngest of four children, was closest in age to his sister Judith, known as Judy, and when he was born his father wrote that he had "come to play the Punch to Judy's endless show." A. M. (Abe) Rosenthal, the *Times* columnist and former executive editor, told me, "He's a modest man, but not a person who will allow himself to be pushed aside." Rosenthal added that there were those "who tried to take over his prerogatives, and they disappeared." Punch Sulzberger's friend and longtime counterpart, as chairman of the Washington Post Company, Katharine Graham offers this tribute: "I think because he's so low key and so nice that people tend to underestimate him."

In 1963, when Sulzberger succeeded Orvil Dryfoos, the newspaper and the company had total revenues of a hundred million dollars. By the end of 1995, revenues had reached two billion four hundred million dollars, and, in addition to the flagship *Times*, the company had twenty-one regional newspapers, nine magazines, six small television stations and two radio stations (in mid-May, plans to buy two more TV stations were announced), part of two paper companies, and modest investments in new media. "Our strategy of diversifying our revenues has worked," Sulzberger told the shareholders at Town Hall. "In 1976, only thirty-five per cent of our revenues came from operations other than the *Times*. Today, fifty per cent of our revenues come from these varied operations."

Punch Sulzberger did something that his predecessors had done, something increasingly rare in a journalistic world driven by profit margins. In the mid-seventies, when the *Times* had lost readers and a quarter of its advertising base, he rejected paring news coverage in order to save money. He approved increasing the daily paper from two sections to four, expanding suburban coverage in the tri-state region, and adding a daily business section and special daily sections.

These moves attracted new, upscale readers, and the new readers attracted new advertisers. The *Times* was also diversifying by launching a national edition. Today, nearly half the *Times'* circulation revenues come from outside the New York metropolitan area. Arthur Gelb, who was instrumental in developing the sections and subsequently became managing editor (he retired in 1989 and is now president of the New York Times Company Foundation), remembered, "You always felt the paper had to make a profit, but that was not the prime motivation. You always believed that if you put out the strongest paper the profits would follow. Punch supported the newsroom's belief that if something went wrong you enriched the soup, you didn't water it and dilute it."

The last four years, in particular, have been eventful ones for Punch Sulzberger and the *Times*, starting with his decision, in 1992, to ask his son to succeed him as publisher, while he retained the titles of chairman and chief executive officer. Arthur, Jr., who was then forty years old, had served a fuller apprenticeship at the paper than his father had: fourteen years as reporter, editor, ad salesman, production and corporate-planning executive, and, finally, deputy publisher.

Over these last four years, the paper has enhanced its metropolitan and business coverage, and has introduced color photographs and illustrations in its Sunday paper; it has gained more control over production by investing in new printing plants and negotiating more flexible union contracts. This recent period, though, has not always been smooth. Daily circulation of the *Times*, like that of many other major papers, has dipped (by almost two per cent, or twenty-two thousand copies, from 1994 to 1995). When Punch Sulzberger decided, in 1993, to acquire the Boston *Globe* for one billion one hundred million dollars, many believed that the Times Company was paying too steeply for a fine newspaper that would not enjoy the growth that electronic journalism would. "That's a yesterday business," Harold McGraw III, the president and chief operating officer of the McGraw-Hill Companies, observed. Because this was a shared perception, the price of Times Company stock sagged. Hoping to boost the stock, the Times sold much of its magazine division, where growth had stalled. When the stock still didn't move, the company announced that it would rely less on print and more on broadcast and new electronic media.

That shift, Lance Primis acknowledged in a May 2nd presentation to investment analysts, has been slower than the company's executives hoped. Not surprisingly, investors snickered, concluding that the excellence displayed on the *Times*' editorial side was not matched by boldness on the company's business side. The stock price, which reached a high of more than forty-nine dollars in 1987, is now trading at just over thirty-two dollars, and until early this year the only announcement that seemed to elevate it

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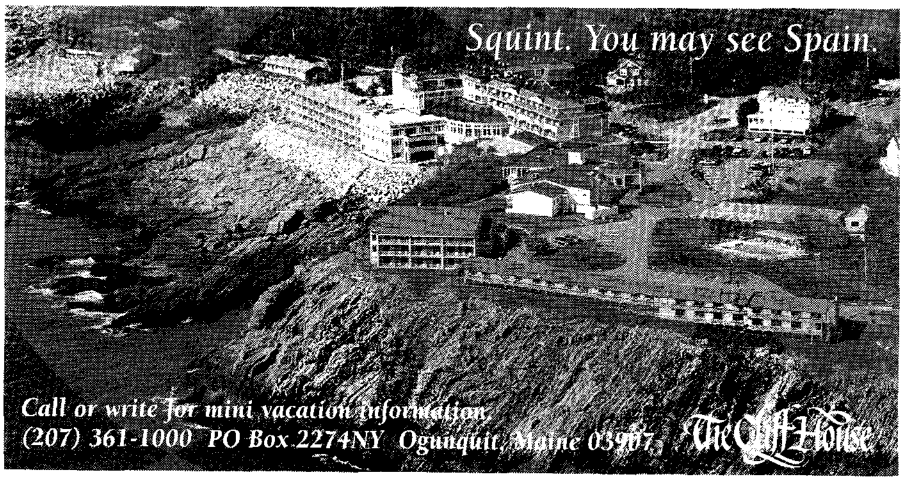
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neurasthenic delegate of prophets (may
God pray for them!), forbade all women
to wear shoes. He barred the cobblers from
tapping their lasts or battering their little anvils;
only poor prosodists could mime their hammer-taps.
This, before he vaporized in the mauve
and umber desert of the air: al-Hakim,
defender of the devious
ambiguity of the Godhead, His penchant for
bagatelles, Creator of the paradox
of sharks and swans, Draconian Comedian!

He placed an interdict on
lamentation. He forbade all women to
weep at funerals, rescinded ululations,
and so each black cortège
wound through the lanes of Cairo voicelessly.
Even sorrow is too great a liberty,
since it inhabits memory, citadel
beyond the fists of despots, or of God.

And sometimes, in the pitch-light of the bazaar,
God's shadow baited bears or egged men on
to braggadocio or fisticuffs, or spied upon
their most secretive gestures, their least,
askance innuendos, their cupped whisperings,
till, surrogate, he evanesced on the Muqattam Hills
one evening, leaving only slivered veils behind.

Perhaps only the forbidden know
the unshod deprivations of the dead,
and perhaps only children who've just learned to walk
savor the nakedness of heels and soles.
Perhaps only the mad
value the little freedom of the shoes.

—ERIC ORMSBY

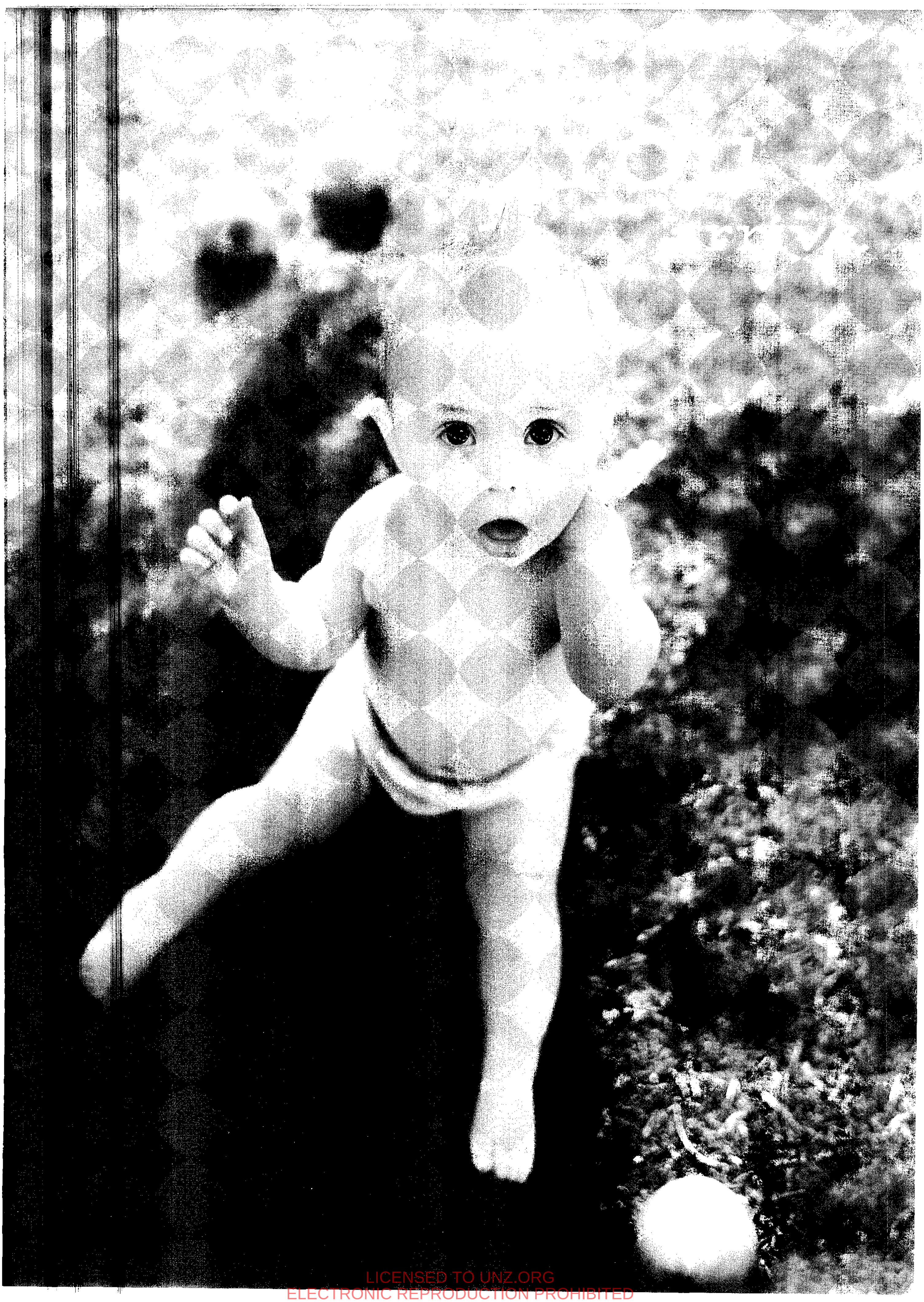
came in September of 1995, when the Times Company hired Diane Price Baker, who had helped guide R. H. Macy & Company out of bankruptcy, as chief financial officer.

In a sense, the weakness of the Times Company derives from its strength. The family institution that justifiably prides itself on inner values may suffer from insularity. At the annual meeting, one shareholder rose to complain that of fifteen company directors reëlected only two are under sixty and eight are over seventy. Like the railroads, which earlier in this century thought that they were in the railroad rather than the transportation business, or like the networks, which thought they were in the single-channel rather than the program business and ignored or fought cable, the Times Company was late to realize that it is in the information rather than the newspaper business. In 1995, of the company's two hundred and twenty-nine million dollars in operating profits, almost ninety-three per cent came from print; less than one per cent of the company's revenues, and no profits, derived from new-media ventures.

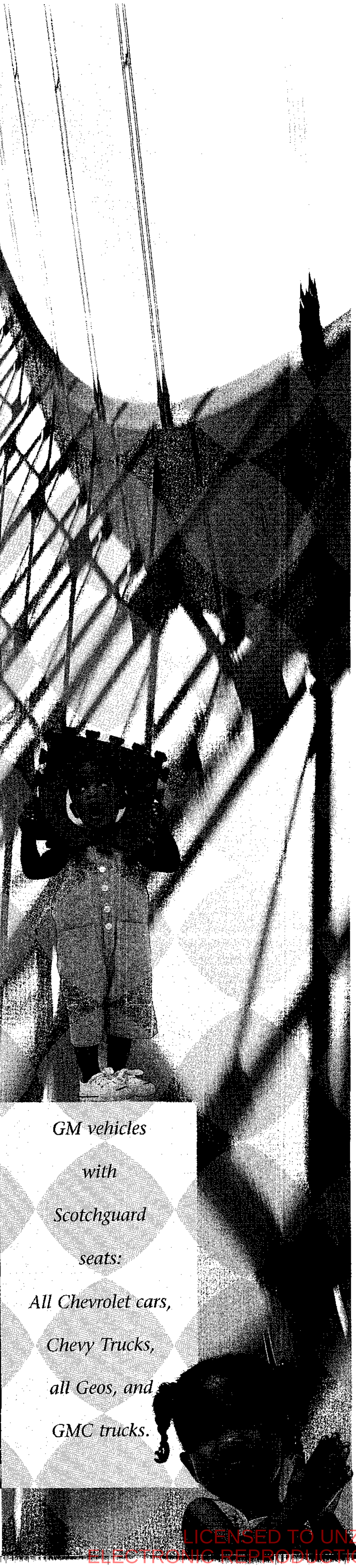
By contrast, Dow Jones & Co., which publishes the *Wall Street Journal* and is also an institution that many think has been too timid, generates more than half of its profits from electronic publishing, according to its president and chief operating officer, Kenneth L. Burenga. "If you asked who our competition is, we'd probably say Reuters, not the New York Times Company," Peter Kann, the Dow Jones chairman and C.E.O. and publisher of the *Wall Street Journal*, says. Michael Bloomberg, who has almost overnight built a television, radio, news-wire, and computer service, asks, "Why is CNN doing worldwide news? Why isn't the New York *Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*?"

Other media companies have raced ahead of the *Times* in the electronic realm. The Tribune Company decided in the eighties to embark on the path that the Times Company has more timorously adopted in the nineties. Today, the Tribune Company, which owns a piece of America Online, generates forty per cent of its revenue from new media, entertainment, and broadcasting. The Washington Post Company owns, in addition to its flagship newspaper and *Newsweek*, six large-market TV stations, cable systems, interactive and on-line investments, and a subsidiary that designs cellular-phone systems. According to its president and chief operating officer, Alan G. Spoon, about sixty-five per cent of the Post Company's cash flow derives from nonprint investments. "They're not spending enough time on where the future is going," the PaineWebber media analyst Christopher Dixon says of the Times Company. "They're buying TV stations at the top of the market." So far, he adds, the Times Company has "put up a good defense, not a good offense."

Like other papers, the *Times* has also moved to cut costs in order to boost profit margins. The *Times* employed three thousand nine-hundred and thirty full-time people at the end of 1995, or four hundred and twenty-nine fewer than worked there in 1992, Russell Lewis, the general manager, told Wall Street analysts. Compared with the cost-cutting at other newspapers, these reductions are modest, but they have added to tensions at the *Times*. Mindful of the Times Company's depressed stock price, and aware that, according to a PaineWebber analysis, its corporate profit margins of nine per cent in 1994 were lower than those of many other media companies, Lance Primis and Diane Baker have pressed hard for deeper reductions. During an annual budget review in November, attended by Punch Sulzberger, Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., Baker, and a few top editors, Primis surprised Arthur, Jr., by de-



You listen to
the thrum
of the tires
on the road
(the sound
soothes colic)
and give
the big people
in front
something
to look at
in the rearview
mirror
besides the
car behind
them.



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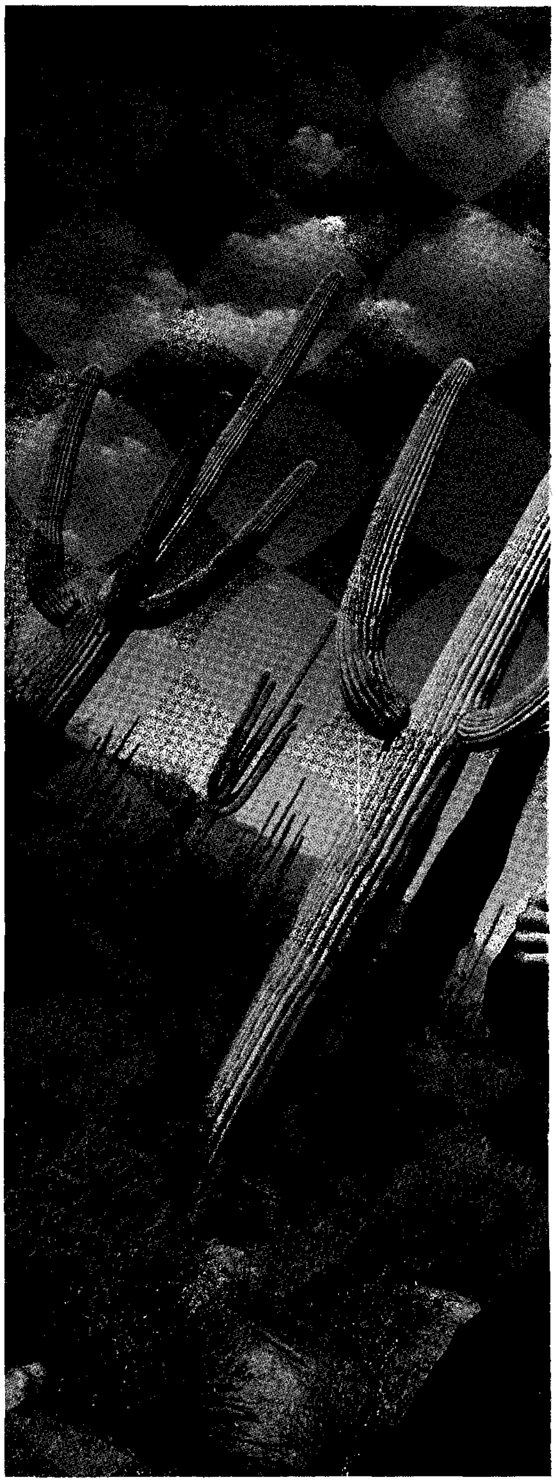

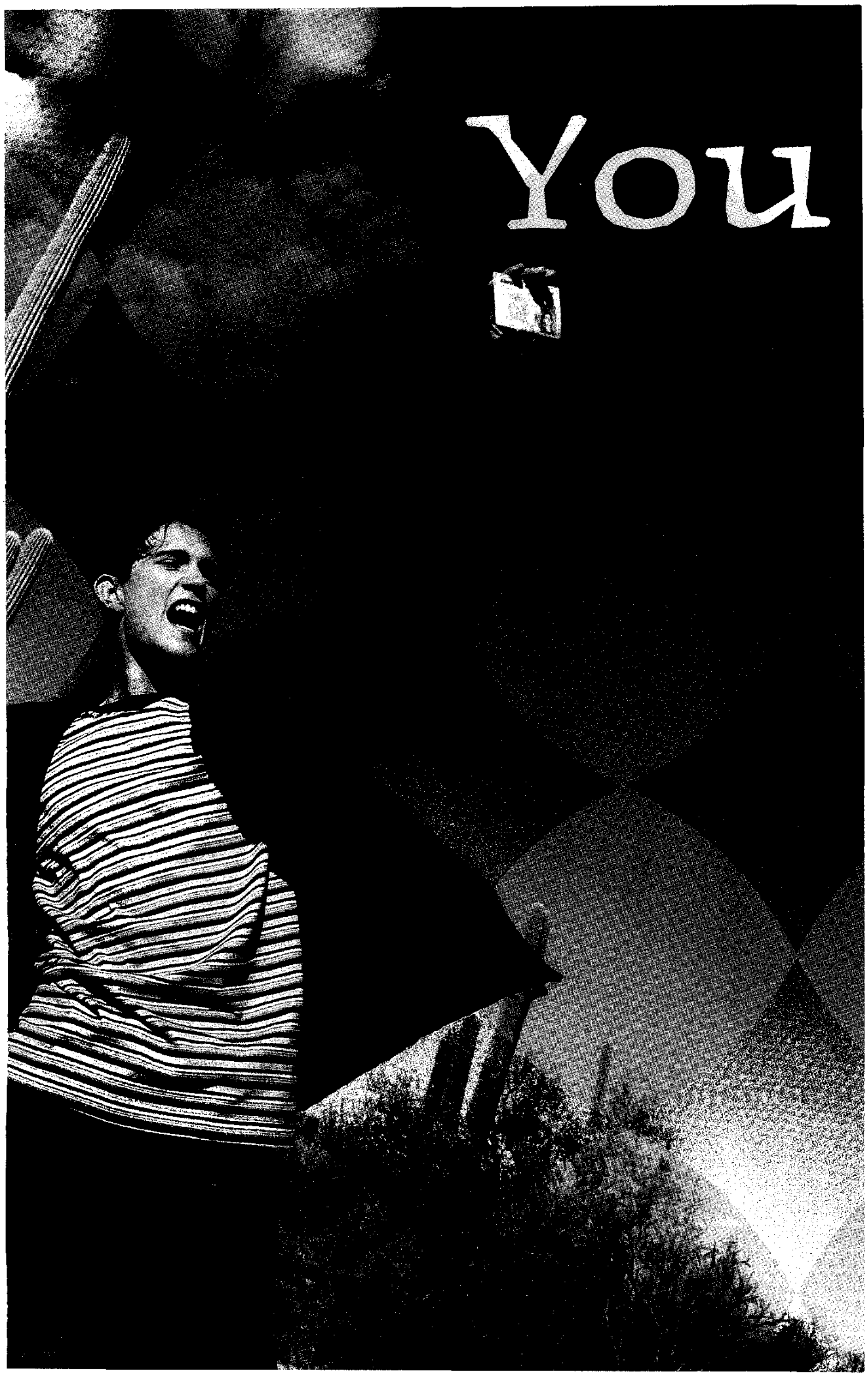

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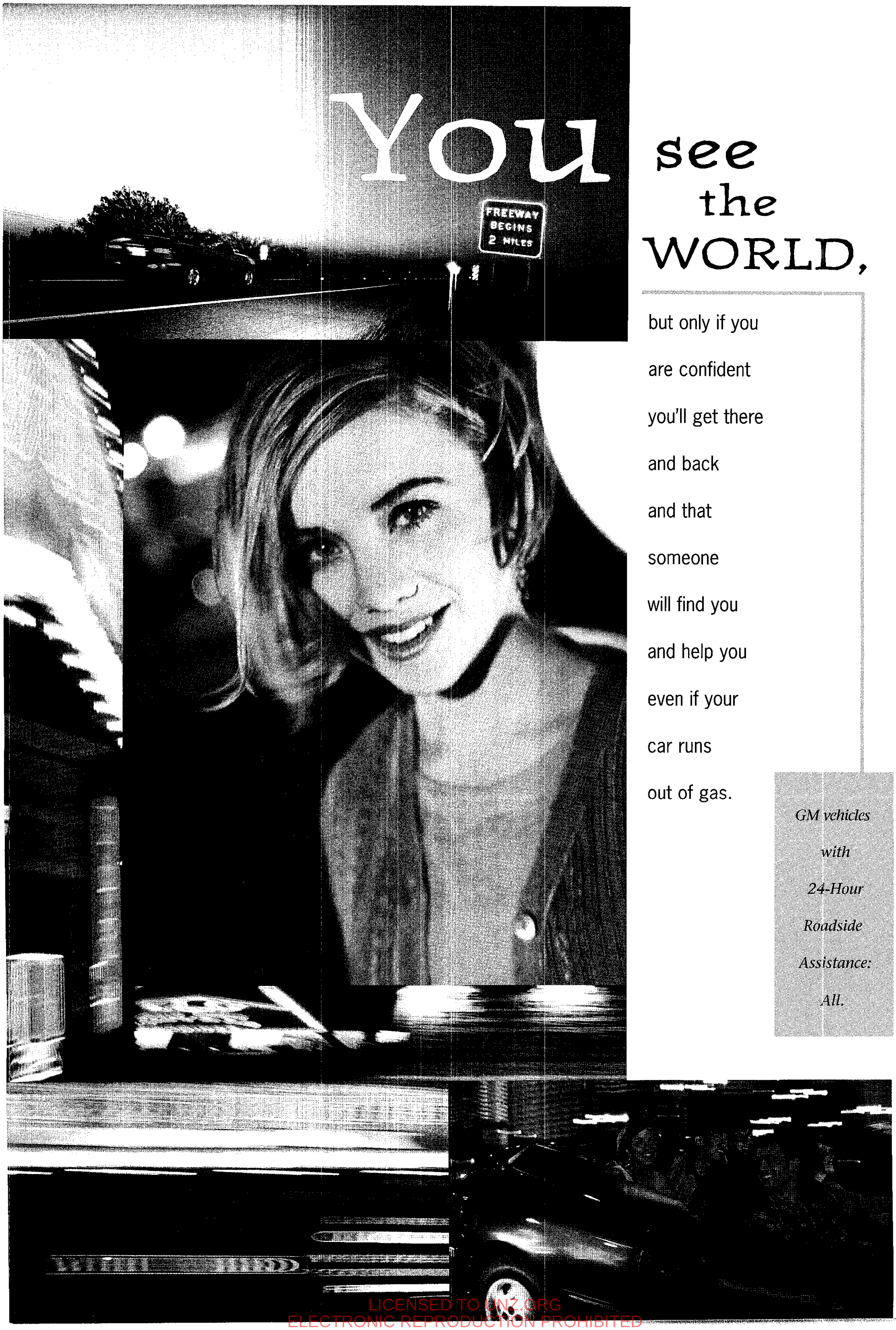
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2 MILES

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you'll get there
and back
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someone
will find you
and help you
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your own rooms yet the biggest room in the house

is the garage because that's the room you go to,

to get away.

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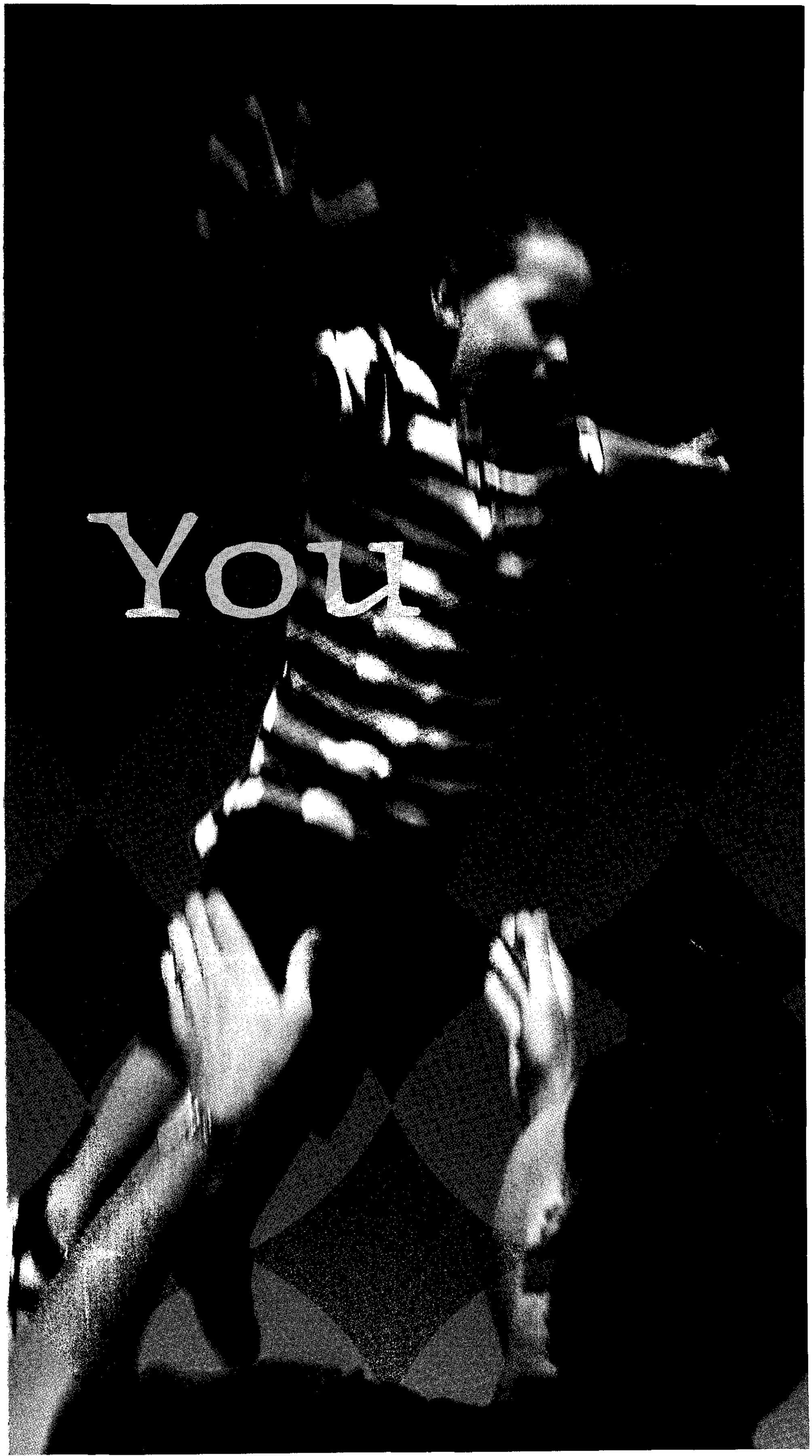

over.

The doctor says

just lead a normal life

but normally there isn't

a baby between you

and the steering wheel.

Does this safety belt fit two?

Maybe you should check

the gas gauge.

Oil. Coolant.

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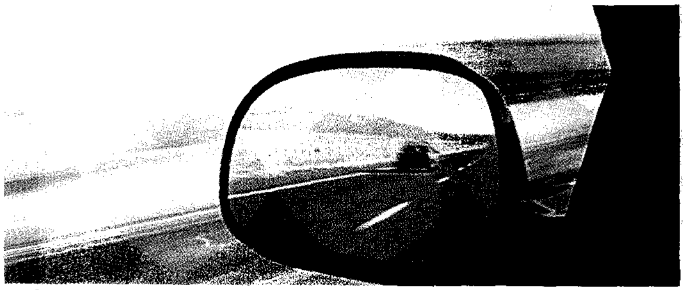

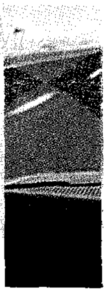

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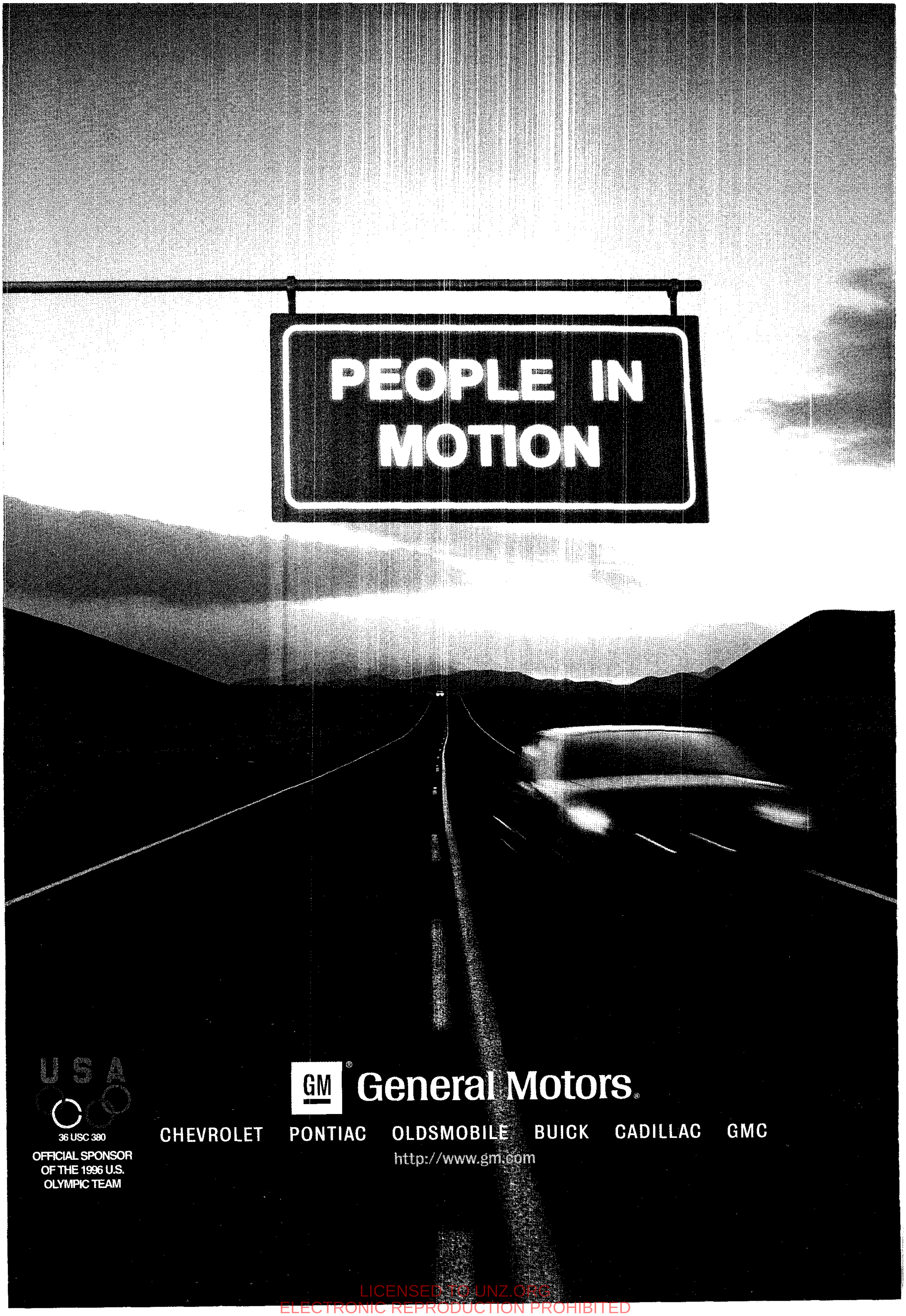
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manding that the paper pare an additional three million dollars from what he had previously thought was a final figure. Since the publisher reports to the corporate chief operating officer, Primis thought he was doing his job, but Arthur, Jr., according to senior executives, thought Primis was trying to humiliate him and the newspaper. According to a participant, he said, angrily, "If that three million dollars is to come from the newspaper, it won't come solely from the newsroom!" According to friends, Arthur, Jr., felt that Primis had sandbagged him and had adopted the conviction, common among businessmen, that journalism is wasteful. (Both Arthur, Jr., and Primis declined to be interviewed for this article.)

Many editors are aware that Arthur, Jr., like his father, invested more money in news gathering when the paper's profits and circulation dipped, and they worry because they think this value system may be changing. Referring to Primis and other corporate executives, a senior editor complains, "They are questioning the mission of the paper as never before." It is a measure of the paper's loss of sanctity that some of the corporate executives are at times openly disdainful of top editors, and even of the publisher, criticizing them for resistance to change.

THE mystery is why events have taken this turn. One theory is that Punch Sulzberger wants to impose discipline on his son, and that Primis is following his boss's lead. Father and son had an awkward relationship over the years, starting in 1956, when Punch and his first wife divorced. At the age of fourteen, young Arthur went to live with his father, but the relationship between Sulzberger's second wife, the late Carol Sulzberger, and her stepson was a wintry one, and in recent years both Punch and Carol confided to friends their belief that Arthur, Jr., had allowed an excessive amount of opinion to infiltrate the news pages. Whatever the differences between father and son, however, it should be noted that when Punch Sulzberger remarried, in March, Arthur, Jr., was his best man.

Then, there is a theory, held by some in the newsroom, that Primis feels emboldened by a more assertive board. I.B.M.'s chief executive officer, Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., who joined the Times Company board a decade ago, when he was the president of American Express, is pressing the company to move more swiftly on the electronic front—to shake up the institution, as he feels he is doing at I.B.M. A senior Times corporate executive wonders, "Is Primis trying to block Arthur, Jr.? Is it a case of an executive trying to secure his career, as every executive does? Or is it a coup?" Such notions may be overwrought, since by most accounts board meetings are tepid affairs. Donald Stewart, who, with Gerstner, is the only director under sixty, says, "The character of the board is very civilized, very convivial. If anyone raised his voice, eyes would go up."

There are critics who theorize that Primis is blinded by ambition for the top job, and critics who consider Arthur, Jr., and his newsroom supporters to be spoiled brats. A male friend of the family suggests that differences between Primis and Arthur, Jr., may reflect differences "between some members of the family and Arthur," for Arthur, Jr., he says, "is not popular." A female friend of the family says, "Part of this is the revenge of the girls. They're smart women, yet their little brother got the job."

Tensions inside the *Times* newsroom further compound the institution's angst. Last year, about half of the company's profits was contributed by its flagship, and in December editors were told that their bonuses would be double the amount for which they were eligible. This good news soon soured, however, when Joseph Lelyveld, the executive editor, met with department heads and left the impression that he was reluctant to see them get such generous bounties because, he reportedly said, they were greater than the editors had any right to expect when the newsroom was facing cuts. While the editor is widely admired for his brilliance and integrity, he is also generally regarded as an unsmiling and unapproachable boss.

The newsroom is unsettled for other reasons, too. Next year, when a new printing plant and distribution center opens, at College Point, in Queens, a later production schedule will require the *Times* to have a group of senior editors working at night. Moreover, Arthur, Jr., and Lelyveld are planning to eliminate some of the paper's seven assistant-managing-editor positions—a move that would help make room for the next generation of editors. Already, one assistant managing editor, Warren Hoge, has accepted the coveted as-

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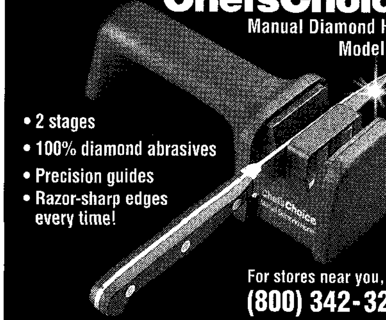
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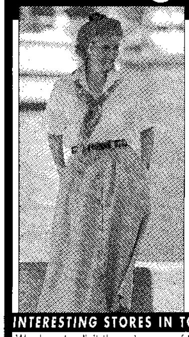

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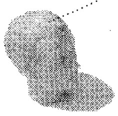

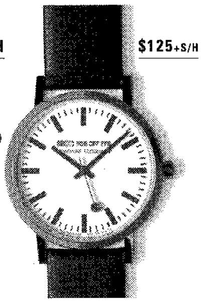

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signment of London bureau chief; others may not be so fortunate.

There is a larger concern in the newsroom—over Lelyveld's and the publisher's choice to succeed Eugene L. Roberts, Jr., the managing editor, who will turn sixty-five next spring and has told associates that he will leave by then. The paper has had two "interim" managing editors in the past eight years: Arthur Gelb, for whom the mandatory newsroom retirement age of sixty-five was stretched when he was asked to stay a few months beyond it; and Roberts, who was lured back to the paper from semi-retirement in 1994. These moves were made because at the time management believed that the logical contenders for the job needed more seasoning, particularly since a young managing editor becomes the likely heir to the job of executive editor. With Roberts leaving, the *Times* will probably announce his successor before the end of this year—a move that alarms many in the newsroom, who fret that Lelyveld will push Gerald Boyd, who is seen as his personal favorite among the assistant managing editors, to succeed Roberts and thus be first in line to become the next executive editor.

Boyd is commonly thought of within the newsroom as both a micromanager and a bit of a bully, and this reputation prompted management to encourage him to attend what the newsroom derisively calls "charm school." For five days, starting on April 29th, Boyd attended seminars for senior executives at the Center for Creative Leadership, in Colorado Springs. What editors at the *Times* say they do not know is whether this training was meant to enhance Boyd's prospects of becoming managing editor or was an acknowledgment that he was out of the running. Because Boyd is black and many of his critics are white, racial lines get drawn, with each side claiming that Boyd is either a beneficiary or a victim of a racial double standard. "He's at a management level where a lot of guys are getting moved out, and they hate him for it," a black journalist on the paper says. "A lot of people try to rationalize personal failures on racial grounds."

Many of the people on the paper, black and white, paint another scenario. They believe that, just as Max Frankel, the former editorial-page editor, was Punch Sulzberger's fail-safe backup choice in 1986 to succeed Abe Rosenthal as executive editor, so Howell Raines, the current editorial-page editor, is Arthur, Jr.,'s choice as backup to become managing editor and eventually to succeed Lelyveld. Raines, who has won a Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, has his detractors, including journalists who believe that he is arrogant and too pugilistic, and that he favors "stars" in a newsroom where starring roles are scarce. But few doubt his qualifications or deny that Raines would invest the newsroom with more spirit. To an April 26th cocktail party at his home, on West Eleventh Street, Raines invited an army of *Times* employees, past and present, and wandered through the four-story house dispensing bonhomie. Few failed to receive his message: It can be fun to work at the *Times*.

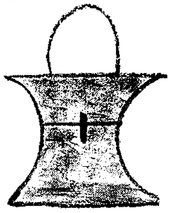
For Raines, however, there would be drawbacks to becoming managing editor. He would be going from a job where he reports to the publisher to a job where he would report to Lelyveld. At the age of fifty-three, Raines would have to coexist as a partner with the fifty-nine-year-old Lelyveld, probably for at least five years. This could be a problem, since their relationship has never been warm.

THE really worrisome succession question inside the Times Company, of course, remains that of Punch Sulzberger's eventual successor. While friends and board members note that he is still energetic and is happily remarried, they guess that he will want to leave within five years, at most.

The dilemma for Arthur, Jr., a close associate says, is that he "wants both jobs"—publisher and chairman—yet knows that unless something changes he is unlikely to have both. Associates outside the *Times* have urged him to seek the more powerful posts, those of chairman and C.E.O. His allies in the newsroom have also reluctantly concluded that the best way for him to protect the newspaper is to become the head of the company and keep an eye on the publisher. The trouble with this scenario is that Michael Golden has never worked at the newspaper, and has told friends that he believes he has better training for becoming the chairman and C.E.O. than for becoming the publisher.

The signal that Golden, at forty-six, is being groomed for one of the two roles arrived in the form of an oblique announcement last December of his promotion to a corporate vice-presidency. By placing him under Lance Primis, Punch Sulzberger in effect sanctioned a contest between his nephew and his son. The promotion, Golden's mother, Ruth Holmberg, said, "is a way of responding to what he's done so far." She added, "Often a family member has to run twice as hard to stay in the same place. The world doesn't owe us a living. The next generation feels the same pressures we did."

There is also the possibility that the *Times* might go outside the family. I asked Holmberg if she could imagine a non-family member at the head of the company. "I guess I can," she said. "I hope I don't have to ever imagine the family not being involved." The assumption of family friends is that the longer Punch Sulzberger remains on the job, the less likely it is that the Times Company will bestow the mantle of chairman or C.E.O. on either Primis or an outsider, as other family-dominated communications companies—including Hearst, E. W. Scripps, and McGraw-Hill—have done.



Finally, there is the possibility that, despite the safeguards of a family trust that was created in 1986 and requires collective, rather than unilateral, family decisions, the family could find itself caught up in the sort of struggle that has traumatized companies like Times Mirror and has driven newspapers to the auction block. "I don't think you'd ever see the family split like that," a family friend has said. "They're too fond of one another and of the institution." Under the terms of the trust, the sale of the paper can be decided only by a unanimous family vote—and then only if such a sale is designed, in the words of the agreement, "to maintain the editorial independence and integrity" of the New York *Times*. The agreement also stipulates that any family member wishing to sell controlling stock must first offer to sell it to other members of the family, and then to the company itself, before it can be sold elsewhere.

While the Sulzbergers may fall short when measured by the company's stock price and profit margins, these are not the sole measures of a journalistic institution. Peter Kann, of Dow Jones, declared, "Those of us entrusted with what really are a very few great news organizations in this country—and you can count them on the fingers of two hands—do have some higher responsibility than profits. You can't run a news organization the way you run McDonald's outlets. That sounds pompous. . . . It doesn't mean you can't cut jobs or make changes." It does mean, he added, that if the quality of the *Journal* is maintained the company can extend its franchise "to other forms"—like the magazine *SmartMoney* or Dow Jones's business-news channels in Asia and Europe. "The return you make from news comes back to you in so many ways," he said.

That is the value system that has sustained the New York *Times* for a hundred years. "To me, and to the people who work on the New York *Times*, it's not a money generator—it's a public trust," Ruth Holmberg said. That is not a phrase much in favor among media C.E.O.s, who fear that investors would think them soft for uttering it. For example, last November, when Michael H. Jordan, the chairman and C.E.O. of Westinghouse, officially became chairman of CBS, I asked him at a press conference whether owning a network was different—more of a public trust—from owning other businesses. He seemed almost embarrassed by the question. "Yes," he answered. "I think there is something to that." Lest he be misunderstood by investors worried that he might do something rash, Jordan warned that the term "the public trust" could not "be a shield." Similarly, when executives from the Times Mirror Company appeared at the PaineWebber media conference in December the C.E.O., Mark Willes, kept speaking of "margins" and "costs" and "growth" and "assets." The word "quality" was never invoked in speaking of such superior journalistic holdings as the Los Angeles *Times* and *Newsday*. Arthur, Jr., on the other hand, invoked the word "quality" like a mantra.

That spirit was very much present in February of 1990, at the memorial service for Iphigene Sulzberger, at Temple Emanu-El. Susan Dryfoos looked at the mourners who crowded the synagogue, but she spoke to her grandmother:

> We, your family, understand our birthright, and will pass it along to future generations. To be born into this family means to carry on a tradition that is by far greater than any single individual. We understand that the New York Times is a trust. . . . We understand that we have the responsibility *and* the privilege—to carry on. And we will, Granny.

She concluded, "We will be humble. No swelled heads." ♦

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PERSONAL HISTORY

SORRY FOR YOUR TROUBLES

The life that the author's parents encountered in the New York of the thirties was so hard and painful that they went back home to Ireland, thinking that nothing as terrible could ever happen to them again.

BY FRANK McCOURT

THERE she was on the platform at Limerick—Grandma, white hair, sour eyes, a black shawl, and no smile for my mother or any of us, even my brother Malachy, with his big smile and sweet white teeth. Mam pointed to Dad. This is my husband, she said, and Grandma nodded and looked away. She called two boys who were hanging around the railway station and paid them to carry the trunk. The boys had shaved heads, snotty noses, and no shoes and we followed them through the streets of Limerick. I asked Mam why they had no hair and she said their heads were shaved so that the lice would have no place to hide. Malachy said, What's a lice? and Mam said, Not lice. One of them is a louse. Grandma said, Will ye stop it! What kind o' talk is this? The boys whistled and laughed and trotted along as if they had shoes and Grandma told them, Stop that laughin' or 'tis droppin' an' breakin' that trunk ye'll be. They stopped the whistling and laughing and we followed them into a park with grass so green it dazzled you.

Dad carried the twins, Mam carried a bag in one hand and held Malachy's hand with the other. When she stopped every few minutes to catch her breath, Grandma said, Are you still smokin' them fags? Them fags will be the death of you. There's enough consumption in Limerick without people smokin' fags on top of it an' 'tis a rich man's foolishness.

Along the path through the park there were hundreds of flowers of different colors that excited the twins. Dad stopped and put Eugene and Oliver down. He said, Flowers, and the twins ran back and forth, pointing, trying to say "flowers." One of the boys with the trunk said, God, are they Americans? and Mam said, They are. They were born in New York. The boy said to the other boy, God, they're Americans. They put the trunk down and stared at us and we stared back at them till Grandma said, Are ye goin' to stand here all day lookin' at flowers an' gawkin' at each other? And we all moved on again, out of the park, down a narrow lane, and into another lane to Grandma's house.

THERE is a row of small houses on each side of the lane and Grandma lives in one of the small houses. Her kitchen has a shiny polished black iron range with a fire glowing in the grate. There is a picture on the wall by the range of a man with long brown hair and sad eyes. He is pointing to his chest, where there is a big heart with flames coming out of it. Mam tells us, That's the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and I want to know why the man's heart is on fire and why doesn't He throw water on it? Grandma says, Don't these children know anything about their religion? and Mam tells her it's different in America. Grandma says the Sacred Heart is everywhere and there's no excuse for that kind of ignorance.

There aren't enough chairs for everyone so I sit on the stairs with my brothers to have bread and tea. Dad and Mam sit at the table and Grandma sits under the Sacred Heart. She says, I don't know under God what I'm goin' to do with ye. There is no room in this house. There isn't room for even one of ye.

Malachy says, Ye, ye, and starts to giggle and I say, Ye, ye, and the twins say, Ye, ye, and we're laughing so hard we can hardly eat our bread.

Grandma glares at us. What are ye laughin' at? There's nothin' to laugh at in this house. Ye better behave yeerselves before I go over to ye.

She won't stop saying Ye, and now Malachy is helpless with laughter, spewing out his bread and tea, his face turning red.

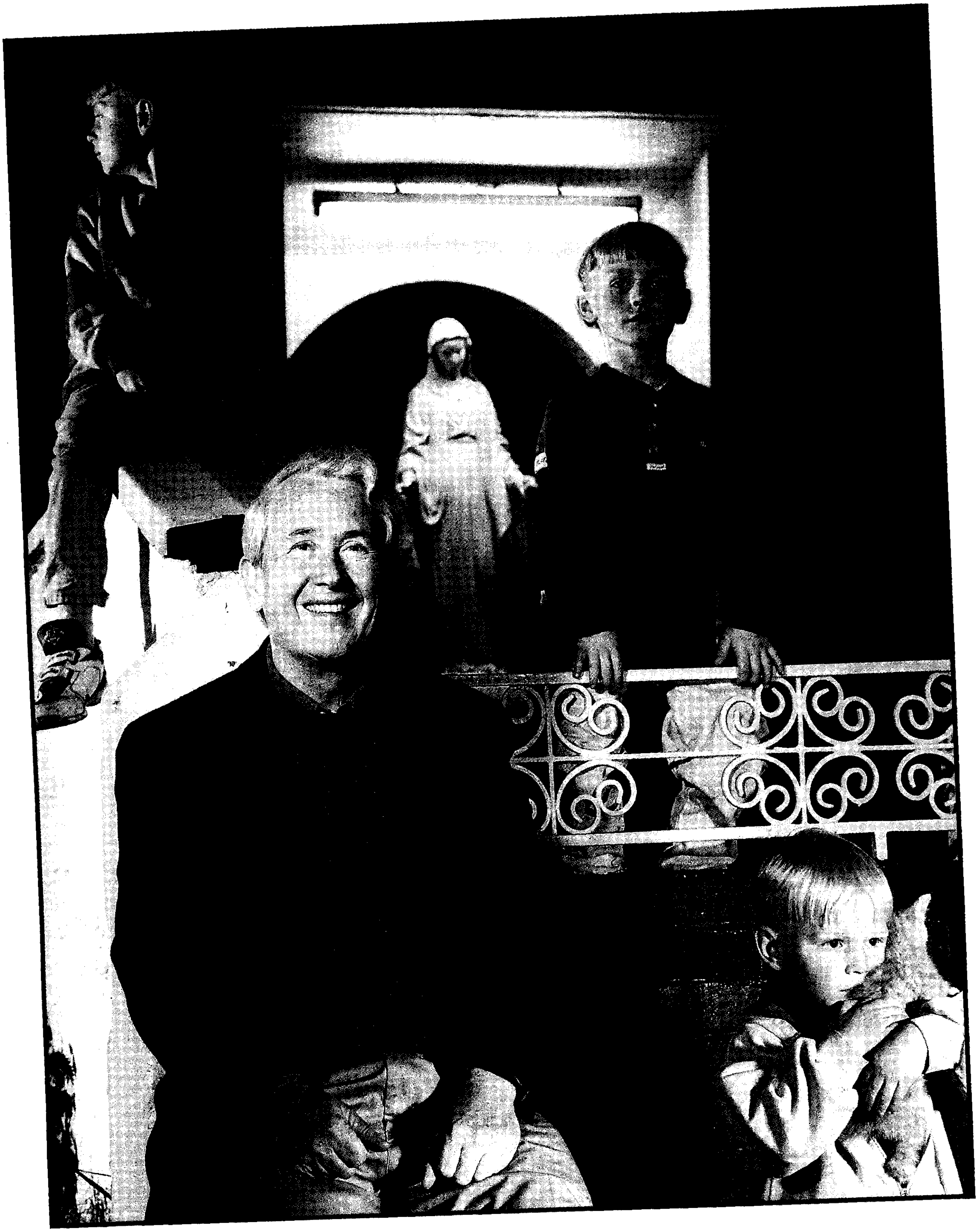
THAT night Mam's sister, Aunt Aggie, came home from her job in the clothing factory. She was big and she had flaming-red hair. She was living in Grandma's because she had had a fight with her husband, Pa Keating, who told her, when he had taken drink, You're a great fat cow, go home to your mother. That's what Grandma told Mam and that's why there was no room for us in Grandma's house. She had herself, Aunt Aggie, and her son Pat, who was my uncle and who was out selling newspapers.

Grandma spread coats and rags on the floor of the little back room and we slept there and in the morning Aunt Aggie came for her bicycle telling us, Will ye mind yeerselves, will ye. Will ye get out of my way?

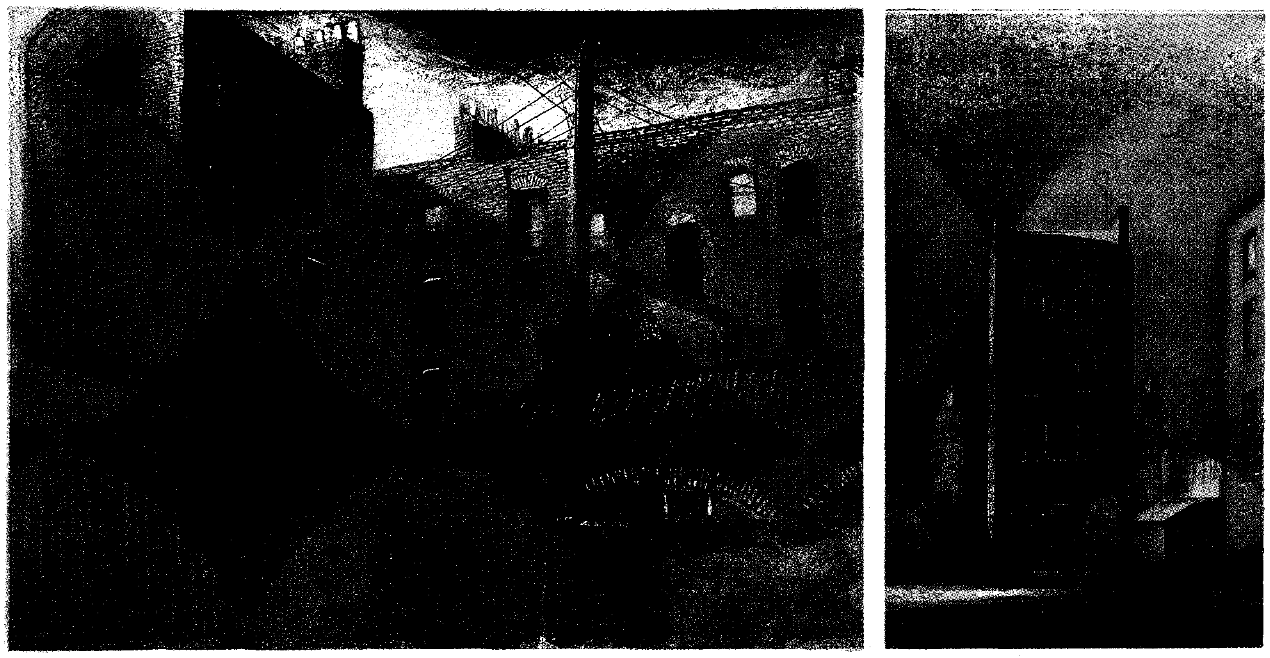
When she left, Malachy kept saying, Will ye mind yeerselves, will ye? Will ye get out of the way, will ye? and I could hear Dad laughing out in the kitchen till Grandma came down the stairs and he had to tell Malachy be quiet.

That day Grandma and Mam went out and found a furnished room on Windmill Street. Grandma paid the rent, ten shillings for two weeks. She gave Mam money for food, loaned us a kettle, a pot, a frying pan, knives and spoons, jam jars to be used for mugs, a blanket and a pillow. She said that was all she could afford, that Dad would have to get up off his arse, get a job, go on the dole, go for the charity at the St. Vincent de Paul Society, or go on the relief.

The room had a fireplace where we could boil water for our tea or for an egg in case we ever came into money. We had a table and three chairs and a bed that Mam said was the biggest she had ever seen. It didn't matter that there were six of us in the bed, we were together,



Frank McCourt in Limerick. "Irish is fine for patriots, English for traitors, but it's the Latin that gains us Heaven." Photograph by Dudley Reed.



“Dad says that someday, with God’s help, we’ll get out of Limerick. I ask him what ‘afflicte

away from grandmothers, Malachy could say Ye, ye, ye, and we could laugh as much as we liked.

Dad and Mam lay at the head of the bed, Malachy and I at the bottom, the twins wherever they could find comfort. In the moonlight I could look up the length of the bed and see Dad still awake and when Oliver cried in his sleep Dad reached for him and held him. Whisht, he said. Whisht.

Then Eugene sat up, screaming, tearing at himself. Ah, ah, Mommy, Mommy. Dad sat up. What? What’s up, son? Eugene went on crying and when Dad leaped from the bed and turned on the gaslight we saw the fleas, leaping, jumping, fastened to our flesh. We slapped at them and slapped but they hopped from body to body, hopping, biting. We jumped from the bed, the twins crying, Mam moaning, Oh, Jesus, will we have no rest! Dad poured water and salt into a jam jar and dabbed at our bites. The salt burned, but he said we’d feel better soon.

Mam sat by the fireplace with the twins on her lap. Dad pulled on his trousers and dragged the mattress off the bed and out to the street. He filled the kettle and the pot with water, stood the mattress against the wall, pounded it with a shoe, told me to keep pouring water on the ground to drown the fleas dropping there. The Limerick moon was so bright I could see bits of it shimmering in the water and I wanted to scoop up moon bits, but how could I with the fleas leaping on my legs?

A man on a bicycle stopped and wanted to know why Dad was beating that mattress. Mother o’ God, he said, I never heard such a cure for fleas. Do you know that if a man could jump like a flea one leap would take him halfway to the moon? The thing to do is this, When you go back inside with that mattress stick it on the bed upside down and that will confuse the little buggers. They won’t know where they are and they’ll be biting the mattress or each other, which is the best cure of all. They’re a right bloody torment an’ I should know for didn’t I grow up in Limerick, down in the Irish Town, an’ the fleas there were so plentiful an’ forward they’d sit on the toe of your boot an’ discuss Ireland’s woeful history with you. It is said there were no fleas in ancient Ireland, that they were brought in be the English to drive us out of our wits entirely, an’ I wouldn’t put it past the English.

Dad said, You wouldn’t by any chance have a cigarette, would you?

A cigarette? Oh, sure, of course. Here you are. Aren’t I nearly destroyed from the fags myself. The oul’ hacking cough, you know. So powerful it nearly knocks me off the bicycle. I can feel that cough stirring in me solar plexus an’ workin’ its way up through me entrails till the next thing it takes off the top o’ me head.

He wobbled away on his bicycle, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, the cough racking his body. Dad said, Limerickmen talk too much. Come on, we’ll put this mattress back and see if there’s any sleep in this night.

EUGENE is sleeping under a coat on the bed. Dad sits by the fireplace with Oliver on his lap. Oliver’s cheeks are bright red and he’s staring into the dead fire. Mam puts her hand on his forehead. I think he has a fever, she says. I wish I had an onion and I’d boil it in milk and pepper. That’s good for the fever. But even if I had what would I boil the milk on? We need coal for that fire.

She gives Dad the docket for the coal down the Dock Road. He takes me with him, but it’s dark and all the coalyards are closed.

What are we going to do now, Dad?

I don’t know, son.

Ahead of us, women in shawls and small children are picking up coal along the road.

There, Dad, there’s coal.

Och, no, son. We won’t pick coal off the road. We’re not beggars.

He tells Mam the coalyards are closed and we’ll have to drink milk and eat bread tonight, but when I tell her about the women on the road she passes Eugene to him.

If you’re too grand to pick coal off the road I’ll put on my coat and go down the Dock Road.

COURTESY OF LIMERICK CITY GALLERY OF ART, PERMANENT COLLECTION

neans and he says, Sickness, son, and things that don't fit." Etchings by Dieter Blodau.

She gets a bag and takes Malachy and me with her. Beyond the Dock Road there is something wide and dark with lights glinting in it. Mam says that's the River Shannon. She says that's what she missed most of all in America, the River Shannon. The Hudson was lovely but the Shannon sings. I can't hear the song, but my mother does and that makes her happy. The other women are gone from the Dock Road and we search for the bits of coal that drop from lorries. Mam tells us gather anything that burns, coal, wood, cardboard, paper. She says, There are them that burn the horse droppings but we're not gone that low yet. When her bag is nearly full she says, Now we have to find an onion for Oliver. Malachy says he'll find one but she tells him, No, you don't find onions on the road, you get them in shops.

The minute he sees a shop he cries out, There's a shop, and runs in.

Oonyen, he says. Oonyen for Oliver.

Mam runs into the shop and tells the woman behind the counter, I'm sorry. The woman says, Lord, he's a dote. Is he an American or what?

Mam says he is. The woman smiles and shows two teeth, one on each side of her upper gum. A dote, she says, and look at them gorgeous goldy curls. And what is it he wants now? A sweet?

Ah, no, says Mam. An onion. I wanted to get an onion for my other child that's sick.

True for you, missus. You can't beat the onion boiled in milk. And look, little boy, here's a sweet for yourself and one for the other little boy, the brother, I suppose. And here's a nice onion for the sick child, missus.

Mam says, God bless you, ma'am, and her eyes are watery.

Dad is walking back and forth with Oliver in his arms and Eugene is playing on the floor with a pot and a spoon. Dad says, Did you get the onion?

I did, says Mam, and more. I got coal and the way of lighting it.

I knew you would. I said a prayer to St. Jude. He's my favorite saint, patron of desperate cases.

I got the coal. I got the onion, no help from St. Jude.

Dad says, You shouldn't be picking up coal off the road like a common beggar. It isn't right. Bad example for the boys.

Then you should have sent St. Jude down the Dock Road.

Mam gets the fire going, cuts the onion in half, and drops it in boiling milk. She takes Oliver on her lap and tries to feed him, but he turns away and looks into the fire.

Ah, come on, love, she says. Good for you. Make you big and strong.

He tightens his mouth against the spoon. She puts the pot down, rocks him till he's asleep, lays him on the bed, and tells the rest of us be quiet or she'll demolish us. She slices the other half of the onion and fries it in butter with slices of bread. She lets us sit on the floor around the fire where we eat the fried bread and sip at scalding sweet tea in jam jars.

The fire makes the room warm and with the flames dancing in the coal you can see faces and mountains and valleys and animals leaping. Eugene falls asleep on the floor and Dad lifts him to the bed beside Oliver. Mam puts the boiled-onion pot up on the mantelpiece for fear a mouse or a rat might be at it.

Soon we're all in bed and if there's the odd flea I don't mind because it's warm in the bed with the six of us and I love the glow of the fire the way it dances on the walls and ceiling and makes the room go red and black, red and black, till it dims to white and black and all you can hear is a little cry from Oliver turning in my mother's arms.

DAD is touching my shoulder. Come on, Francis, you have to take care of your little brothers.

Mam is slumped on the edge of the bed, making small crying sounds like a bird. Grandma is pulling on her shawl. She says, I'll go down to Thompson the undertaker about the coffin and the carriage. The St. Vincent de Paul Society will surely pay for that, God knows.

Dad stands facing the wall over the fire, beating on his thighs with his fists, sighing, Och, och, och.

Dad frightens me with his Och, och,

och, and Mam frightens me with her small bird sounds, and I don't know what to do, though I wonder if anyone will light the fire in the grate so that we can have tea and bread. If Dad would move away from the fireplace I could light the fire myself. All you need is paper, a few bits of coal or turf, and a match. He won't move so I try to go around his legs while he's beating on his thighs, but he notices me and wants to know why I'm trying to light the fire. I tell him we're all hungry and he lets out a crazy laugh. Hungry? he says. Och, Francis, your wee brother Oliver is dead.

He picks me up and hugs me so hard I cry out. Then Malachy cries, my mother cries, Dad cries, I cry, but Eugene stays quiet. Then Dad sniffles, We'll have a feast. Come on, Francis.

He carries me through the streets of Limerick and we go from shop to shop with him asking for food or anything they can give to a family that has two children dead in a year, one in America, one in Limerick, and in danger of losing three more for the want of food and drink. Most shopkeepers shake their heads.

Dad says he's glad to see the spirit of Christ alive in Limerick and they tell him they don't need the likes of him with his Northern accent to be telling them about Christ and he should be ashamed of himself dragging a child around like that, like a common beggar, a tinker, a knacker.

A few shopkeepers give bread, potatoes, tins of beans and Dad says, We'll go home now and you boys can eat something, but we meet Uncle Pa Keating and he tells Dad he's very sorry for his troubles and would Dad like to have a pint in this pub here?

There are men sitting in this pub with great glasses of black stuff before them. They lift their glasses carefully and slowly drink. There is creamy white stuff on their lips which they lick with little sighs.

Uncle Pa says, Frankie, this is the pint. This is the staff of life. This is the best thing for nursing mothers and for those who are long weaned.

He laughs and Dad smiles and I laugh because I think that's what you're supposed to do when Uncle Pa says something. He doesn't laugh when he tells the other men about Oliver dying. The other men tip their hats to Dad. Sorry for your troubles, mister, and surely you'll have a pint.

Dad says yes to the pints and soon he's singing "Roddy McCorley" and "Kevin Barry" and song after song I never heard before and crying over his lovely little girl, Margaret, that died in America and his little boy Oliver. It frightens me the way he yells and cries and sings and I wish I could be at home with my three brothers, no, my two brothers, and my mother.

The man behind the bar says to Dad, I think now, mister, you've had enough. We're sorry for your troubles but you have to take that child home to his mother that must be heartbroken by the fire.

Dad says, One, one more pint, just one, eh? and the man says no. Dad shakes his fist. I did me bit for Ireland, and when the man comes out and takes Dad's arm Dad tries to push him away.

Uncle Pa says, Come on now, stop the blackguarding. You have to go home to Angela. You have a funeral tomorrow and the lovely children waiting for you.

Dad wants to go to another place for a pint but Uncle Pa says he has no more money. Dad says he'll tell everyone his sorrows and they'll give him pints. Uncle Pa says that's a disgraceful thing to do and Dad cries on his shoulder. You're a good friend, he tells Uncle Pa. It's terrible, terrible, says Uncle Pa, but you'll get over this in time.

Dad straightens up and looks at him. Never, he says. Never.

NEXT day we rode to the hospital in a carriage with a horse. They put Oliver into a white box that came with us in the carriage and we took him to the graveyard. I did not like the jackdaws that perched on trees and gravestones and I did not want to leave Oliver with them. I threw a rock at a jackdaw that waddled over toward Oliver's grave. Dad said I shouldn't throw rocks at jackdaws, they might be somebodies' souls. I didn't know what a soul was but I didn't ask him, because I didn't care. Oliver was dead and I hated jackdaws. I'd be a man someday and I'd come back with a bag of rocks and I'd leave the graveyard littered with dead jackdaws.

THE morning after Oliver's burial Dad went to the Labour Exchange to sign and collect the week's dole, nineteen shillings and sixpence. He said he'd be home by noon, that he'd get coal and make a fire, that we'd have rashers and eggs and tea in honor of Oliver, that we might even have a sweet or two.

He wasn't home by noon, or one, or two, and we boiled and ate the few potatoes the shopkeepers had given us. He wasn't home anytime before the sun went down that day in May. There was no sign of him till we heard him, long after the pubs closed, rolling along Windmill Street, singing.

He stumbled into the room, hanging on to the wall. A snot oozed from his nose and he wiped it away with the back of his hand. He tried to speak. Zeeze shildren should be in bed. Lishen to me. Shildren go to bed.

Mam faced him. These children are hungry. Where's the dole money?

She tried to stick her hands into his pockets but he pushed her away. Have reshpeck, he said. Reshpeck in front of shildren.

She struggled to get at his pockets. Where's the money? The children are hungry. You mad oul' bastard, did you drink all the money again? Just what you did in Brooklyn.

He blubbered, Och, poor Angela. And poor wee Margaret and poor wee Oliver.

He staggered to me and hugged me and I smelled the drink I used to smell in America. My face was wet from his tears and his spit and his snot and I was hungry and I didn't know what to say when he cried all over my head.

MAM follows Dad to the Labour Exchange. She marches in behind him and when the man pushes the money toward Dad she takes it. The other men nudge each other and grin and Dad is disgraced because a woman is never supposed to interfere with a man's dole money. He might want to put sixpence on a horse or have a pint and if all the women start acting like Mam the horses will stop running and Guinness will go broke. But she has the money now and we move to another room, on Hartstonge Street. Then she carries Eugene in her arms and we go up the street to Leamy's National School. The headmaster, Mr. Scallan, says Malachy and I are to return on Monday with a composition book, a pencil, and a pen with a good nib on it. We are not to come to school with ringworm or lice, and our noses are to be blown at all times, not on the floor, that spreads the consumption, or on our sleeves but in a handkerchief or a clean rag. He asks us if we are good boys and when we say we are he says, Good Lord, what's this? Are they Yanks or what?

The boys in Leamy's want to know why we talk like that, too. Are ye Yanks or what? And when we tell them we came from America they want to know, Are ye gangsters or cowboys?

A big boy sticks his face up to mine. I'm asking ye a question, he says. Are ye gangsters or cowboys?

I tell him I don't know and when he pokes his finger into my chest Malachy says, I'm a gangster, Frank's a cowboy. The big boy says, Your little brother is smart and you're a stupid Yank.

The boys around him are excited. Fight, they yell, fight, and he pushes me so hard I fall. I want to cry but the blackness comes over me and I rush at him, kicking and punching. I knock him down and try to grab his hair to bang his head on the ground, but there's a sharp sting across the backs of my legs and I'm pulled away from him.

Mr. Benson, one of the masters, has me by the ear and he's whacking me across the legs. You little hooligan, he says. Is that the kind of behavior you brought from America? Well, by God, you'll behave yourself before I'm done with you.

He tells me hold out one hand and then the other and hits me with his stick once on each hand. Go home now, he says, and tell your mother what a bad boy you were. You're a bad Yank. Say after me, I'm a bad boy.

I'm a bad boy.

Now say, I'm a bad Yank.

I'm a bad Yank.

Malachy says, He's not a bad boy. It's that big boy. He said we were cowboys and gangsters.

Is that what you did, Heffernan?

I was only jokin', sir.

No more joking, Heffernan. It's not their fault that they're Yanks.

'Tisn't, sir.

And you, Heffernan, should get down on your two knees every night and thank God you're not a Yank for if you were, Heffernan, you'd be the greatest gangster on two sides of the Atlantic. Al Capone would be coming to you for lessons. You're not to be bothering these two Yanks anymore, Heffernan.

I won't, sir.

And if you do, Heffernan, I'll hang your pelt on the wall. Now go home, all of ye.

THERE are seven masters in Leamy's National School and they all have leather straps, canes, blackthorn sticks. They hit you with the sticks on the shoulders, the back, the legs, and, especially, the hands. If they hit you on the hands it's called a slap. They hit you if you're late, if you have a leaky nib on your pen, if you laugh, if you talk, and if you don't know things.

They hit you if you don't know why God made the world, if you don't know the patron saint of Limerick, if you can't recite the Apostles' Creed, if you can't add nineteen to forty-seven, if you can't subtract nineteen from forty-seven, if you don't know the chief towns and products of the thirty-two counties of Ireland, if you can't find Bulgaria on the wall map of the world that's blotted with spit, snot, and blobs of ink thrown by angry pupils expelled forever.

They hit you if you can't say your name in Irish, if you can't say the Hail Mary in Irish, if you can't ask for the lavatory pass in Irish.

One master will hit you if you don't know that Eamon de Valera is the greatest man that ever lived. Another master will hit you if you don't know that Michael Collins was the greatest man that ever lived.

Mr. Benson hates America, and you have to remember to hate America or he'll hit you.

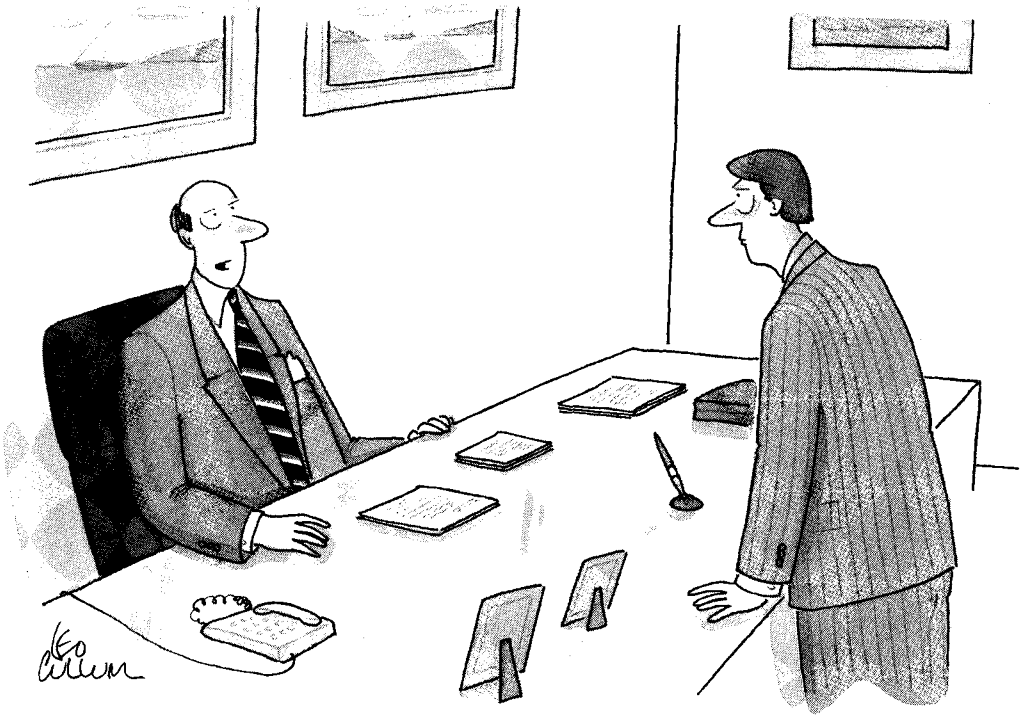
Mr. O'Dea hates England, and you have to remember to hate England or he'll hit you.

If you ever say anything good about Oliver Cromwell they'll all hit you.

I KNOW Oliver is dead and Malachy knows Oliver is dead but Eugene is too small to know anything. When he wakes in the morning he says, Ollie, Ollie, and toddles around the room looking under the beds or he climbs up on the bed by the window and points to children on the street, especially children with fair hair like him and Oliver.

Dad and Mam tell him Oliver is in Heaven playing with angels and we'll all see him again someday, but he doesn't understand, because he's only two and doesn't have the words and that's the worst thing in the whole world.

Malachy and I play with him. We try



"It's come to my attention that some of the salaried employees are asking where the Hamptons are. Under no circumstances are they to be told."

to make him laugh. We make funny faces. We put pots on our heads and pretend to let them fall off. We take him to the People's Park to see the lovely flowers, play with dogs, roll in the grass.

Dad says Eugene is lucky to have brothers like Malachy and me because we help him forget and soon, with God's help, he'll have no memory of Oliver at all.

He died anyway.

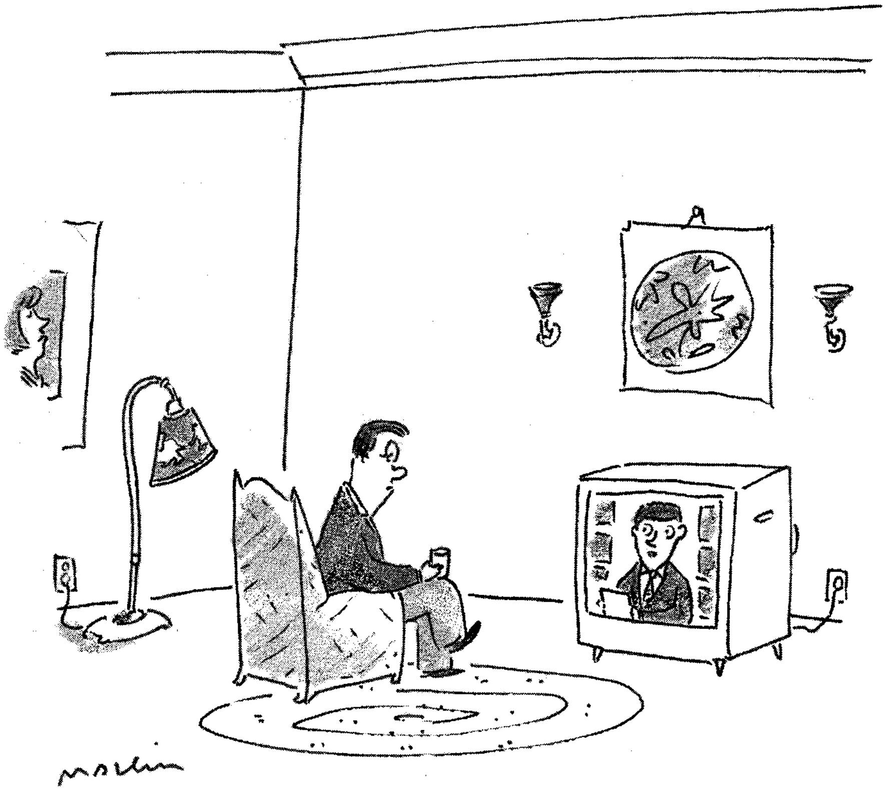
Six months after Oliver went, we woke on a mean November morning and there was Eugene, cold in the bed beside us. Dr. Troy came and said that child died of pneumonia and why wasn't he in the hospital long ago? Dad said he didn't know and Mam said she didn't know and Dr. Troy said that's why children die. People don't know.

Mam says she can't spend another minute in that room on Hartstonge Street. She sees Eugene morning, noon, and night. She sees him climbing the bed to look out at the street for Oliver and sometimes she sees Oliver outside and Eugene inside, the two of them chatting away. She's happy they're chatting like that but she doesn't want to be seeing and hearing them the rest of her life. She says if she doesn't move soon she'll go out of her mind and wind up in the lunatic asylum.

We move to Roden Lane on top of a place called Barrack Hill. The houses are called two up, two down: two rooms on top, two on the bottom. Our house is at the end of the lane, the last of six. Next to our door is a small shed—a lavatory—and next to that a stable.

Mam goes to the St. Vincent de Paul Society to see if there's any chance of getting furniture. The man says he'll give us a docket for a table, two chairs, and two beds. He says we'll have to go to a secondhand-furniture shop down in the Irish Town and haul the furniture home ourselves. Mam says we can use the pram she had for the twins and when she says that she cries.

We're happy with the house. We can walk from room to room and up and down the stairs. You feel very rich when you can go up and down the stairs all day as much as you please. Dad lights the fire and Mam makes the tea. He sits at the table on one chair, she sits on the other, and Malachy and I sit on the trunk we brought from America. While we're drinking our tea an old man passes our door with a bucket in his hand. He empties the bucket into the lavatory and flushes and there's a powerful stink in our kitchen. Mam goes to the door and says, Why are you emptying your bucket in our lavatory? He raises his cap to her. Your lavatory, missus? Ah, no. You're making a bit of a mistake there, ha, ha. This is not your lavatory. Sure, isn't this the lavatory for the whole lane. You'll see passing your door here the buckets of eleven families and I can tell you it gets very powerful here in the warm weather, very powerful altogether. 'Tis December now, thank God, with a chill in the air and the lavatory isn't that bad, but the day will come when you'll be calling for a gas mask. So, good night to you, missus, and I hope you'll be happy in your house.



"The top of the news is coming right up. But, first, the bottom of the news."

And he shuffles up the lane laughing away to himself.

Mam comes back to her chair and her tea. We can't stay here, she says. That lavatory will kill us all with diseases.

Dad says, We can't move again. Where will we get a house for six shillings a week? We'll keep the lavatory clean ourselves. We'll boil buckets of water and throw them in there.

Oh, will we? says Mam, and where will we get the coal or turf or blocks to be boiling water?

Dad says nothing. He finishes his tea and looks for a nail to hang our one picture. The man in the picture has a thin face. He wears a yellow skullcap and a black robe with a cross on his chest. Dad says he was a Pope, Leo XIII, a great friend of the workingman. He brought this picture all the way from America, where he found it thrown out by someone who had no time for the workingman. Mam says he's talking a lot of bloody nonsense and he says she shouldn't say "bloody" in front of the children. Dad finds a nail but wonders how he's going to get it into the wall without a hammer. Mam says he could go borrow one from the people next door but he says you don't go around borrowing from people you don't know. He leans the picture against the wall and drives in the nail with the bottom of a jam jar. The jam jar breaks and cuts his hand and a blob of blood falls on the Pope's head. Mam tries to wipe the blood away with her sleeve but it's wool and spreads the blood till the whole side of the Pope's face is smeared. Dad says, Lord above, Angela, you've destroyed the Pope entirely, and she says, Arrah, stop your whining, we'll get some paint and go over his face someday, and Dad says, He's the only Pope that was ever a friend to the workingman and what are we to say if someone from the St. Vincent de Paul Society comes in and sees blood all over him? Mam says, I don't know. It's your blood and 'tis a sad thing when a man can't even drive a nail straight. It just goes to show how useless you are.

Victoria Roberts

"I feel there's a whole culture around mules."

• •

DAD can't get any work. He gets up early on weekdays, lights the fire, boils water for the tea and his shaving mug. He puts on a shirt and attaches a collar with studs. He will never leave the house without collar and tie. A man without collar and tie is a man with no respect for himself, he says.

Bosses and foremen always show him respect and say they're ready to hire him, but when he opens his mouth and they hear the North of Ireland accent they take a Limerickman instead. That's what he tells Mam by the fire and when she says, Why don't you dress like a proper workingman? he says he'll never give an inch, never let them know, and when she says, Why can't you try to talk like a Limerickman? he says he'll never sink that low and the greatest sorrow of his life is that his sons are now afflicted with the Limerick accent. He says that someday, with God's help, we'll get out of Limerick and far from the Shannon that kills.

I ask Dad what "afflicted" means and he says, Sickness, son, and things that don't fit.

When he's not looking for work Dad goes for long walks, miles into the country. He asks farmers if they need any help, that he grew up on a farm and can do anything. If they hire him he goes to work right away with his cap on and his collar and tie. He works so hard and long the farmers have to tell him stop. They wonder how a man can work through a long hot day with no thought of food or drink. Dad smiles. He never brings home the money he earns on farms. That money seems to be different from the dole, which is supposed to be brought home. He takes the farm money to the pub and drinks it. Mam hopes he might think of his family and pass the pub even once, but he never does. She hopes he might bring home something from the farm, potatoes, cabbage, turnips, carrots, but he'll never bring home anything, because he'd never stoop so low as to ask a farmer for anything. Mam says 'tis all right for her to be begging at the St. Vincent de Paul Society for a docket for food but he can't stick a few spuds in his pocket. He says it's different for a man. You have to keep the dignity.

When the farm money is gone he rolls home singing and crying over Ireland and his dead children, mostly about Ireland. If he sings "Roddy McCorley," it means he had only the price of a pint or two. If he sings "Kevin Barry," it means he had a good day, that he is now falling-down drunk and ready to get us out of bed, line us up, and make us promise to die for Ireland, unless Mam tells him leave us alone or she'll brain him with the poker.

He goes to bed, pounds the wall with his fist, sings a woeful song, falls asleep. He's up at daylight because no one should sleep beyond the dawn. He wakes Malachy and me and we're tired from being kept up the night before with his talking and singing. We complain and say we're sick, we're tired, but he pulls back the overcoats that cover us and forces us out on the floor. It's December and it's freezing and we can see our breath. We pee into the bucket by the bedroom door and run downstairs for the warmth of the fire Dad has already started. We wash our faces and hands in a basin that sits under the water tap by the door. Everything around the tap is damp, the floor, the wall, the chair the basin sits on. The water from the tap is icy and our fingers turn numb. Dad says this is good for us, it will make men of us. He throws the icy water on his face and neck and chest to show there's nothing to fear. We hold our hands to the fire for the heat that's in it but we can't stay there long, because we have to drink our tea and eat our bread and go to school. Dad makes us say grace before meals and grace after meals and he tells us be good boys at school because God is watching every move and the slightest disobedience will send us straight to hell where we'll never have to worry about the cold again.

And he smiles.

THE master says it's time to prepare for First Confession and First Communion, to know and remember all the questions and answers in the catechism, to become good Catholics, to know the difference between right and wrong, to die for the Faith if called on.

The master says it's a glorious thing to die for the Faith and Dad says it's a glorious thing to die for Ireland and I wonder if there's anyone in the world who would like us to live. My brothers are dead and my sister is dead and I wonder if they died for Ireland or for the Faith. Dad says they were too young to die for anything. Mam says it was disease and starvation and him never having a job. Dad says, Och, Angela, puts on his cap, and goes for a long walk.

It's very handy to have Mikey Molloy living around the corner from me. He's eleven, he has fits, and behind his back we call him Molloy the Fit. Mikey knows everything because he has visions in his fits and he reads books. He's the expert in the lane on Girls' Bodies and Dirty Things in General and he promises, I'll tell you everything, Frankie, when you're eleven like me and you're not so thick and ignorant.

It's a good thing he says Frankie so I'll know he's talking to me because he has crossed eyes and you never know who he's looking at. He says it's a gift to have crossed eyes because you're like a god looking two ways at once and if you had crossed eyes in the ancient Roman times you had no problem getting a good job. When he's not having the fit he sits on the ground at the top of the lane reading the books his father brings home from the Carnegie Library. His mother says, Books, books, books, he's ruining his eyes with the reading, he needs an operation to straighten them, but who'll pay for it. She tells him if he keeps on straining his eyes they'll float together till he has one eye in the middle of his head. Ever after his father calls him Cyclops who is in a Greek story.

Nora Molloy knows my mother from the queues at the St. Vincent de Paul Society. She tells Mam that Mikey has more sense than twelve men drinking pints in a pub. He knows the names of all the Popes from St. Peter to Pius XI. He's only eleven but he's a man, oh, a man indeed. Many a week he saves the family from pure starvation. He borrows a handcart from Aidan Farrell and knocks on doors all over Limerick to see if there are people who want coal or turf delivered, and down the Dock Road he'll go to haul back great bags a hundredweight or more.

Mikey's father, Peter, is a great champion. He wins bets in the pubs by drinking more pints than anyone. All he has to do is go out to the jakes, stick his finger down his throat, and bring it all up so that he can start another round. Peter is such a champion he can stand in the jakes and throw up without using his finger. He's such a champion they could chop off his fingers and he'd carry on regardless. He wins all that money but doesn't bring it home. Sometimes he's like my father and drinks the dole itself and that's why Nora Molloy is often carted off to the lunatic asylum demented with worry over her hungry famishing family. She knows as long as you're in the asylum you're safe from the world and its torments. It's well known that all the lunatics in the asylum have to be dragged in, but she's the only one that has to be dragged out, back to the five children and the champion of all pint drinkers.

You can tell when Nora Molloy is ready for the asylum when you see her children running around white with flour from poll to toe. You know she's inside frantic with the baking. She wants to make sure the children won't starve while she's gone and she roams Limerick begging for flour. She goes to priests, nuns, Protestants, Quakers. She goes to Rank's Flour Mills and begs for the sweepings from the floor. She bakes day and night. Peter begs her to stop but she screams, This is what comes of drinking the dole. He tells her the bread will only go stale. There's no use talking to her. Bake, bake, bake. If she had the money she'd bake all the flour in Limerick and regions beyond. If the men didn't come from the asylum to take her away she'd bake till she fell to the floor.

Nora comes home calm, as if she had been at the seaside. She always says, Where's Mikey? Is he alive? She worries over Mikey because he's not a proper Catholic and if he had a fit and died who knows where he might wind up in the next life. He's not a proper Catholic because he could never receive his First Communion for fear of getting anything on his tongue that might cause a fit and choke him. The master tried over and over with bits of the Limerick *Leader* but Mikey kept spitting them out. The priest tells Mrs. Molloy not to worry. God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform and surely He has a special purpose for Mikey, fits and all. She says, Isn't it remarkable he can swally all kinds of sweets and buns but if he has to swally the body of Our Lord he goes into a fit? Isn't that remarkable?

He sits under the lamppost at the top of the lane and laughs over his First Communion Day, which was all a cod. He couldn't swallow the wafer but did that stop his mother from parading him around Limerick in his little black suit for the Collection? She said to Mikey, Well, I'm not lying so I'm not. I'm only saying

AT THE GALLERIES

SATIN DOLL

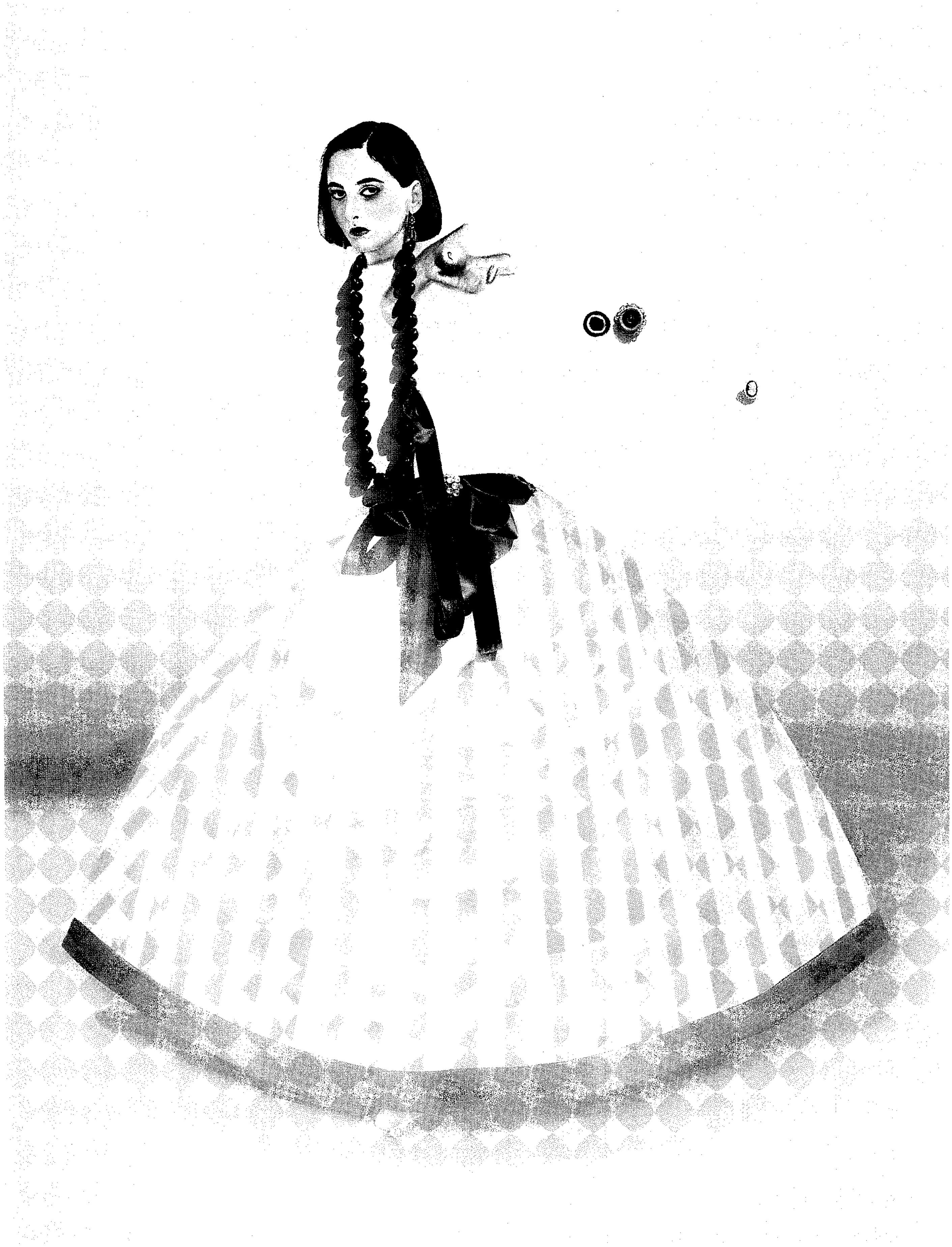
THE sound of a human heart beating is inescapable when you look at the immense, imaginary portrait of a—literally—heartless Mexican beauty in striped taffeta and long beads which has been haunting visitors to the Annina Nosei Gallery, in New York. The canvas, which is ninety and a half inches high and seventy-one inches wide, is called—paradoxically—"Silenzio," and it is the work of Julio Galan, born in 1958, who may well be the most prodigious painter to have come out of Mexico in quite a while.

Latin-American art in general, and Mexican art in particular, has long had links to the European Surrealist tradition, but Galan's painting, besides showing an obvious debt to Dali and Magritte, evokes the folk-art tradition of fixing valued objects to the canvas as the artist's "signature." (The jewels, necklace, and scarlet silk bow are all real.) "Silenzio" also summons the ghosts of Velázquez's infantas and the lacerating self-portraits of Frida Kahlo. It was Kahlo, Galan's most powerful ancestor among Mexican artists, who pinpointed the "magic realist" strain in so much Latin-American art and literature when she said, "I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality."

One suspects that is also true of Galan. As a boy, he spent a great deal of time on his grandfather's remote mining estate, in northern Mexico, assembling a vast collection of antique dolls. In the mid-eighties, he moved to Manhattan and quickly fell in with the circle around that other doll-loving artist Andy Warhol. Now back in his home town of Monterrey, he has become famous for paintings of doleful flamboyance, in many of which the viewer is confronted with the artist's face in fantastic drag. To judge from a catalogue photograph, Galan's boyish features resemble those of his pouty señorita without a torso. It's an image that recalls André Breton's description of Kahlo's paintings as "ribbons round a bomb."

—CHARLES MICHENER

COURTESY OF ANNINA NOSEI GALLERY



"Silenzio" (1996), by Julio Galan.

the detritus group
D. Reilly

to the neighbors, Here's Mikey in his First Communion suit. Mikey's father said, Don't worry, Cyclops. You have loads of time. Jesus didn't become a proper Catholic till he took the bread and wine at the Last Supper and He was thirty-three years of age. Nora Molloy said, Will you stop calling him Cyclops? He has two eyes in his head and he's not a Greek. But Mikey's father, champion of all pint drinkers, is like my Uncle Pa Keating, he doesn't give a fiddler's fart what the world says.

Mikey tells me the best thing about First Communion is the Collection. Your mother has to get you a new suit somehow so she can show you off to the neighbors and relations and they give you sweets and money and you can go to the Lyric Cinema to see Charlie Chaplin.

What about James Cagney?

Never mind James Cagney. Lot of blather. Charlie Chaplin is your only man.

Mikey got over five shillings on his First Communion Day and ate so many sweets and buns he threw up in the Lyric Cinema and Frank Goggin, the ticket man, kicked him out. He says he didn't care, because he had money left over, and went to the Savoy Cinema the same day for a pirate film and ate Cadbury chocolate and drank lemonade till his stomach stuck out a mile. He says he'll go to the cinema the rest of his life, sit next to girls from lanes, and do dirty things like an expert. He loves his mother but he'll never get married for fear he might have a wife in and out of the lunatic asylum. What's the use of getting married when you can sit in cinemas and do dirty things with girls from lanes who don't care what they do because they already did it with their brothers. If you don't get married you won't have any children at home bawling for tea and bread and gasping with the fit and looking in every direction with their eyes. When he's older he'll go to the pub like his father, drink pints galore, stick the finger down the throat to bring it all up, drink more pints, win the bets, and bring the money home to his mother to keep her from going demented. He says he's not a proper Catholic and that means he's doomed so he can do anything he bloody well likes.

The master, Mr. Benson, is very old. He roars and spits all over us every day. The boys in the front row hope he has no diseases for he might be spreading consumption right and left. He tells us we have to know the catechism backwards, forwards, and sideways. We have to know the Ten Commandments, the Seven Virtues, Divine and Moral, the Seven Sacraments, the Seven Deadly Sins. We have to know by heart all the prayers, the Hail Mary, the Our Father, the Confiteor, the Apostles' Creed, the Act of Contrition, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We have to know them in Irish and English and if we forget an Irish word and use English he goes into a rage and goes at us with the stick. If he had his way we'd be learning our religion in Latin, the language of the saints, who communed intimately with God and His Holy Mother, the language of the early Christians, who huddled in the catacombs and went forth to die on rack and sword, who expired in the foaming jaws of the ravenous lion. Irish is fine for patriots, English for traitors and informers, but it's the Latin that gains us entrance to Heaven itself. It's the Latin the martyrs prayed in when the barbarians pulled out their nails and cut their skin off inch by inch. He tells us we're a disgrace to Ireland and her long sad history, that we'd be better off in Africa praying to bush or tree. He tells us we're hopeless, the worst class he ever had for First Communion but as sure as God made little apples he'll make Catholics of us, he'll beat the idler out of us and the Sanctifying Grace into us.

Brendan Quigley raises his hand. We call him Question Quigley because he's always asking questions. He can't help himself. Sir, he says, what's Sanctifying Grace?

The master rolls his eyes to Heaven. He's going to kill Quigley. Instead he barks at him, Never mind what's Sanctifying Grace, Quigley. That's none of your business. You're here to learn the catechism and do what you're told. There are too many people wandering the world asking questions and that's what has us in the state we're in and if I find any boy in this class asking questions I won't be responsible for what happens. Do you hear me, Quigley?

I do.

I do what?

I do, sir.

He goes on with his speech, There are boys in this class who will never know the Sanctifying Grace. And why? Because of the greed. I have heard them abroad in the schoolyard talking about First Communion Day, the happiest day of your life. Are they talking about receiving the body and blood of Our Lord? Oh, no. Those greedy little blackguards are talking about the money they'll get, the Collection. And will they take any of that money and send it to the little black babies in Africa? Will they think of those little pagans doomed forever for lack of baptism and knowledge of the True Faith? Limbo is packed with little black babies flying around and crying for their mothers because they'll never be admitted to the ineffable presence of Our Lord and the glorious company of saints, martyrs, virgins. Oh, no. It's off to the cinemas our First Communion boys run, to wallow in the filth spewed across the world by the Devil's henchmen in Hollywood. Isn't that right, McCourt?

'Tis, sir.

Question Quigley raises his hand again. There are looks around the room and we wonder if it's suicide he's after.

What's henchmen, sir?

The master's face goes white, then red. His mouth tightens and opens and spit flies everywhere. He walks to Question and drags him from his seat. He flogs Question across the shoulders, the bottom, the legs.

Look at this specimen, he roars.

Question is shaking and crying. I'm sorry, sir.

The master mocks him. I'm sorry, sir. What are you sorry for?

I'm sorry I asked the question. I'll never ask a question again, sir.

The day you do, Quigley, will be the day you wish God would take you to His bosom.

He sits down with the stick before him on the desk. He tells Question to stop the whimpering and be a man. If he hears a single boy in this class asking foolish questions or talking about the Collection again he'll flog that boy till the blood spurts.

Now, Clohessy, what is the Sixth Commandment?

Thou shalt not commit adultery, sir.

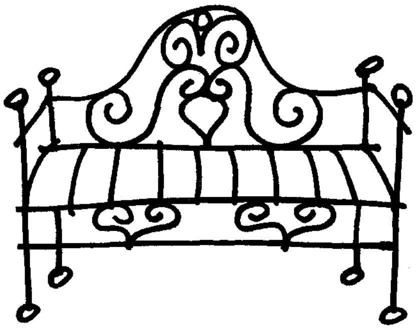
And what is adultery, Clohessy?

Impure thoughts, impure words, impure deeds, sir.

Good, Clohessy. You're a good boy. You may be slow and forgetful in the sir department and you may not have a shoe to your foot but you're powerful with the Sixth Commandment and that will keep you pure.

PADDY CLOHESSY has no shoe to his foot, his mother shaves his head to keep the lice away, his eyes are red, his nose is always snotty. The sores on his kneecaps never heal because he picks at the scabs and puts them in his mouth. His clothes are rags he has to share with his six brothers and a sister and when he comes to school with a bloody nose or a black eye you know he had a fight over the clothes that morning. He hates school. He's seven going on eight, the biggest and oldest boy in the class, and he can't wait to grow up and be fourteen so that he can run away and pass for seventeen and join the English Army and go to India where it's nice and warm and he'll live in a tent with a dark girl with the red dot on her forehead and he'll be lying there eating figs, that's what they eat in India, figs, and she'll cook the curry day and night and plonk on a ukulele and when he has enough money he'll send for the whole family and they'll all live in the tent especially his poor father who's at home coughing up great gobs of blood because of the consumption.

I think Paddy likes me because of the raisin and I feel a bit guilty because I wasn't that generous in the first place. One day Mr. Benson said the government was going to give us the free lunch so we wouldn't have to be going home in the freezing weather. He led us down to a cold room in the dungeons of Leamy's School where the charwoman, Nellie Ahearn, was handing out the half pint of milk and the raisin bun. The milk was frozen in the bottles and we had to melt it between our thighs. The boys joked and said the bottles would freeze our things off and the master roared, Any more of that talk and I'll warm the bottles on the backs of yeer heads. We all searched our raisin buns for a raisin but Nellie said they must have forgotten to put them in and she'd inquire from the man who delivered. We searched again every day till at last I found a raisin in my bun and held it up. Now the boys were begging me for the raisin and offering me everything, a slug of their milk, a pencil, a comic book. Toby Mackey said I could have his sister and Mr. Benson heard him and took him out to the hallway and knocked him around till he howled. I wanted the raisin for myself but I saw Paddy Clohessy standing in the corner with no shoes and the room was freezing and he was shivering like a dog that had been kicked and I always felt sad over kicked dogs so I walked over and gave Paddy the raisin because I didn't know what else to do and all the boys yelled that I was a fool and a feckin' eejit and I'd regret the day and after I handed the raisin to Paddy I longed for it but it was too late now because he pushed it right into his mouth and gulped it and looked at me and said nothing and I said in my head what kind of an eejit are you to be giving away your raisin.



Mr. Benson gave me a look and said nothing and Nellie Ahearn said, You're a great oul' Yankee, Frankie.

FIRST COMMUNION DAY is the happiest day of your life because of the Collection and James Cagney at the Lyric Cinema. The night before I was so excited I couldn't sleep till dawn. I'd still be sleeping if my grandmother hadn't come banging at the door.

Get up! Get up! Get that child outa the bed. Happiest day of his life an' him snorin' above in the bed.

I ran to the kitchen. Take off that shirt, she said. I took off the shirt and she pushed me into a tin tub of icy cold water. My mother scrubbed me, my grandmother scrubbed me. I was raw, I was red.

Come here till I comb your hair, said Grandma. Look at that mop, it won't lie down. You didn't get that hair from my side of the family. That's that North of Ireland hair you got from your father. That's the kind of hair you see on Presbyterians. If your mother had married a proper decent Limerickman you wouldn't have this standing-up, North of Ireland, Presbyterian hair.

She spat on my head.

We ran to the church and arrived just in time to see the last of the boys leaving the altar rail where the priest stood with the chalice and the Host, glaring at me. Then he placed on my tongue the wafer, the body and blood of Jesus. At last, at last.

It's on my tongue. I draw it back.

It stuck.

I had God glued to the roof of my mouth. I could hear the master's voice, Don't let that Host touch your teeth for if you bite God in two you'll roast in Hell for eternity.

I tried to get God down with my tongue but the priest hissed at me, Stop that clucking and get back to your seat.

God was good. He melted and I swallowed Him and now, at last, I was a member of the True Church, an official sinner.

When the Mass ended Mam and Grandma were at the door of the church. They each hugged me to their bosoms. They each told me it was the happiest day of my life. They each cried all over my head.

Mam, can I go now and make the Collection?

No, said Grandma. You're not making no Collection till you've had a proper First Communion breakfast at my house. Come on.

We followed her. She banged pots and rattled pans and complained that the whole world expected her to be at their beck and call. I ate the egg, I ate the sausage, and when I reached for more sugar for my tea she slapped my hand away.

Go aisy with that sugar. Is it a millionaire you think I am? An American? Is it bedecked in glitterin' jewelry you think I am? Smothered in fancy furs?

The food churned in my stomach. I gagged. I ran to her back yard and threw it all up. Out she came.

Look at what he did. Thrun up his First Communion breakfast. Thrun up the body and blood of Jesus. I have God in me back yard. What am I goin' to do? I'll take him to the Jesuits for they know the sins of the Pope himself.

She dragged me through the streets of Limerick. She told the neighbors and passing strangers about God in her back yard. She pushed me into the confession box.

In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It's a day since my last confession.

A day? And what sins have you committed in a day, my child?

I overslept. I nearly missed my First Communion. My grandmother said I have standing-up, North of Ireland, Presbyterian hair. I threw up my First Communion breakfast. Now Grandma says she has God in her back yard and what should she do.

Ah . . . ah . . . tell your grandmother to wash God away with a little water and for your penance say one Hail Mary and one Our Father. Say a prayer for me and God bless you, my child.

Grandma said, Were you telling jokes to that priest in the confession box? If 'tis a thing I ever find out you were telling jokes to Jesuits I'll tear the bloody kidneys outa you. Now what did he say about God in me back yard?

He said wash Him away with a little water, Grandma.

Holy water or ordinary water?

He didn't say, Grandma.

She pushed me back into the confessional.

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned, it's a minute since my last confession.

A minute! Are you the boy that was just here?

I am, Father.

What is it now?

My grandma says, Holy water or ordinary water?

Ordinary water, and tell your grandmother not to be bothering me again.

I told her, Ordinary water, Grandma, and he said don't be bothering him again.

Don't be bothering him again. That bloody ignorant bog trotter.

I asked Mam, Can I go now and make the Collection? I want to see James Cagney.

Grandma said, You can forget about the Collection and James Cagney because you're not a proper Catholic the way you left God on the ground. Come on, go home.

Mam said, Wait a minute. That's my son. That's my son on his First Communion Day.

Grandma said, Take him then to James Cagney and see if that will save his Presbyterian North of Ireland American soul. Go ahead.

She pulled her shawl around her and walked away.

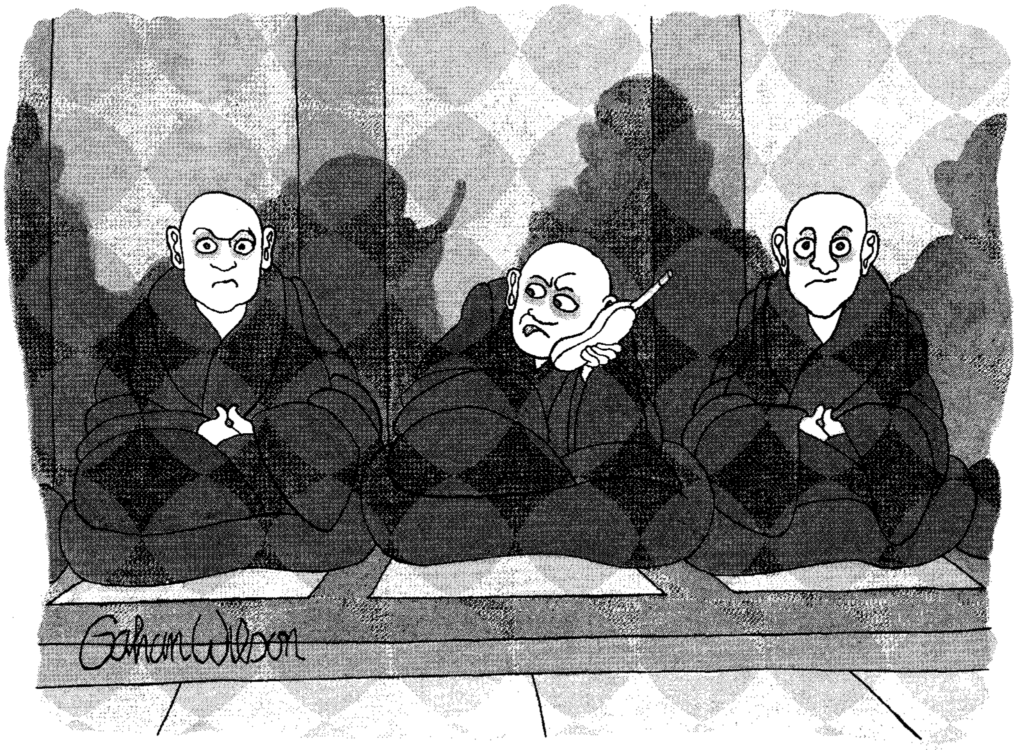
Mam said, God, it's getting very late for the Collection. We'll go to the Lyric Cinema and see if they'll let you in anyway in your First Communion suit.

We met Mikey Molloy on Barrington Street. He asked if I was going to the Lyric and I said I was trying. Trying? he said. You don't have money?

I was ashamed to say no but I had to and he said, That's all right. I'll get you in. I'll create a diversion.

What's a diversion?

I have the money to go and when I get in I'll pretend to have the fit and the ticket man will be



"You notice how these telephone pitches always come just when you're about to achieve satori?"

IN ARCADIA

Half buried in scrub and red poppies
And half exhumed, the barren half-moon

Of the threshing floor, fissured and chipped,
Is bleached the white of lime, of the moon

Itself, full last night, instructed in light,
In chapters of light as wordless as

The owl's wing. Not yet noon, the sun hangs,
Worn and burnished from use, like a heart

Made of glare and ember. The mint spreads
Its mineral flame down the hillside.

Amid the green, the lizard's tongue flicks,
A *Y* of blood divining the air,

There and gone. There and gone. There.

—Eric Pankey

out of his mind and you can slip in when I let out the big scream. I'll be watching the door and when I see you in I'll have a miraculous recovery. That's a diversion.

Mam said, Oh, I don't know about that, Mikey. Wouldn't that be a sin and surely you wouldn't want Frank to commit a sin on his First Communion Day.

Mikey said if there was a sin it would be on his soul and he wasn't a proper Catholic anyway so it didn't matter. He let out his scream and I slipped in and sat next to Question Quigley. It was a thrilling film but sad in the end, because James Cagney was a public enemy and when they shot him they wrapped him up and threw him in the door to shock his poor old Irish mother.

GRANDMA won't talk to Mam anymore because of what I did with God in her back yard. Mam doesn't talk to her sister, Aunt Aggie, or to her brother Uncle Tom. Dad doesn't talk to anyone in Mam's family and they don't talk to him, because he's from the North and he has the odd manner. No one talks to Uncle Tom's wife, Jane, because she's from Galway and she has the look of a Spaniard. Everyone talks to Mam's brother Uncle Pat because he was dropped on his head, he's simple, and he sells newspapers. Everyone talks to Uncle Pa Keating because he was gassed in the war and married Aunt Aggie and if they didn't talk to him he wouldn't give a fiddler's fart anyway and that's why the men in South's pub call him a gas man.

That's the way I'd like to be in the world, a gas man, not giving a fiddler's fart.

People in families in the lanes of Limerick have their ways of not talking to each other and it takes years of practice. There are people who don't talk to each other because their fathers were on opposite sides in the Civil War in 1922. If anyone in your family was the least way friendly to the English in the last seven hundred years it will be brought up and thrown in your face and you might as well move to Dublin, where no one cares. There are families that are ashamed of themselves because their forefathers gave up their religion for the sake of a bowl of Protestant soup during the Famine and those families are known ever after as soupers. It's a terrible thing to be a souper because you're doomed forever to the souper part of Hell. It's even worse to be an informer. The master at school said that every time the Irish were about to demolish the English in a fair fight a filthy informer betrayed them. A man who's discovered to be an informer deserves to be hanged or, even worse, to have no one talk to him, for if no one talks to you you're better off hanging at the end of a rope.

You can always tell when people are not talking by the way they pass each other. The women hoist their noses, tighten their mouths, and turn their faces away. If the woman is wearing a shawl she takes a corner and flings it over her shoulder as if to say, One word or look from you, you ma-faced bitch, and I'll tear the countenance from the front of your head.

Mam is friendly with Bridie Hannon, who lives next door with her mother and father. Mam and Bridie talk all the time. When my father goes for his long walk Bridie comes in. They talk for hours and they whisper and laugh over secret things. We're told go out and play. It might be lashing rain out but Mam says, Rain or no, out you go, and she'll tell us, If you see your father coming, run in and tell me.

If my father comes back early and sees Bridie in the kitchen he says, Gossip, gossip, gossip, and stands there with his cap on till she leaves.

Bridie's mother and other people in our lane and lanes beyond will come to the door to ask Dad if he'll write a letter to the government or to a relation in a distant place. He sits at the table with his pen and bottle of ink and when the people tell him what to write he says, Och, no, that's not what you want to say, and he writes what he feels like writing. The people tell him that's what they wanted to say in the first place, that he has a lovely way with the English language and a fine fist for the writing. They offer him sixpence for his trouble but he waves it away and they hand it to Mam because he's too grand to be taking sixpence. When the people leave he takes the sixpence and sends me to Kathleen O'Connell's shop for cigarettes.

MAM says, I'm a martyr for the fags and so is your father.

There may be a lack of tea or bread in the house but Mam and Dad always manage to get the fags, the Wild Woodbines. They tell us every day we should never smoke, it's bad for your lungs, it's bad for your chest, it stunts your growth, and they sit by the fire puffing away. Mam says, If 'tis a thing I ever see you with a fag in your gob I'll break your face. They tell us the cigarettes rot your teeth and you can see they're not lying. The teeth turn brown and black in their heads and fall out one by one. Dad says he has holes in his teeth big enough for a sparrow to raise a family. He has a few left but he gets them pulled at the clinic and applies for a false set. When he comes home with the new teeth he shows his big new white smile that makes him look like an American and whenever he tells us a ghost story by the fire he pushes the lower teeth up beyond his lip to his nose and frightens the life out of us. Mam's teeth are so bad she has to go to Barrington's Hospital to have them all pulled at the same time and when she comes home she's holding at her mouth a rag bright with blood. She says she'll give up smoking entirely when this bleeding stops but she needs one puff of a fag this minute for the comfort that's in it.

When the bleeding stops and Mam's gums heal she goes to the clinic for her false teeth. She says she'll give up the smoking when her new teeth are in but she never does. The new teeth rub on her gums and make them sore and the smoke of the Woodbines eases them. She and Dad sit by the fire when we have one and smoke their cigarettes and when they talk their teeth clack. Dad claims these teeth were made for rich people in Dublin and didn't fit so they were passed on to the poor of Limerick who don't care because you don't have much to chew when you're poor anyway and you're grateful you have any class of a tooth in your head. If they talk too long their gums get sore and the teeth have to come out. Then they sit talking by the fire with their faces collapsed. Every night they leave the teeth in the kitchen in jam jars filled with water.

Malachy whispers to me in the middle of the night, Do you want to go downstairs and see if we can wear the teeth?

The teeth are so big we have trouble getting them into our mouths but Malachy won't give up. He forces Dad's upper teeth into his mouth and can't get them out again. His lips are drawn back and the teeth make a big grin. He looks like a monster in a film and it makes me laugh but he pulls at them and grunts, and tears come to his eyes. Malachy runs from me, up the stairs, and now I hear Dad and Mam laughing till they see he can choke on the teeth. They both stick their fingers in to pull out the teeth but Malachy gets frightened and makes desperate uck-uck sounds. Mam says, We'll have to take him to hospital. Dad makes me go in case the doctor has questions because I'm older than Malachy and that means I must have started all the trouble. He rushes through the streets with Malachy in his arms and I try to keep up. I feel sorry for Malachy up there on Dad's shoulder, looking back at me, tears on his cheeks and Dad's teeth bulging in his mouth. The doctor at Barrington's Hospital says, No bother. He pours oil into Malachy's mouth and has the teeth out in a minute. Then he looks at me and says to Dad, Why is that child standing there with his mouth hanging open?

Dad says, That's a habit he has, standing with his mouth open.

The doctor says, Come here to me. He looks up my nose, in my ears, down my throat, and feels my neck.

The tonsils, he says. The adenoids. They have to come out. The sooner the better or he'll look like an idiot when he grows up with that gob wide as a boot.

Next day Malachy gets a big piece of toffee as a reward for sticking in teeth he can't get out and I have to go to hospital to have an operation that will close my mouth.

I'm seven, eight, nine, going on ten and still Dad has no work. He drinks his tea in the morning, signs for the dole at the Labour Exchange, reads the papers at the Carnegie Library, goes for his long walks far into the country. If he gets a job at the Limerick Cement Factory or at Rank's Flour Mills he loses it in the third week. He loses it because he goes to the pubs on the third Friday of the job, drinks all his wages, and misses the half day of work on Saturday morning.

Mam tells Bridie Hannon that Dad's a right bloody fool the way he goes to pubs and stands pints to other men while his own children are at home with their bellies stuck to their backbones for the want of a decent dinner. He'll brag to the world that he did his bit for Ireland when it was neither popular nor profitable, that he'll gladly die for Ireland when the call comes, that he regrets he has only one life to give for his poor misfortunate country and if anyone disagrees they're invited to step outside and settle this for once and for all.

Oh, no, says Mam, they won't disagree and they won't step outside, that bunch of tinkers and knackers and begrudgers that hang around the pubs. They tell him he's a grand man, even if he's from the North, and 'twould be an honor to accept a pint from such a patriot.

Mam tells Bridie, I don't know under God what I'm going to do.

Bridie drags on her Woodbine, drinks her tea, and declares that God is good. Mam says she's sure God is good for someone somewhere but He hasn't been seen lately in the lanes of Limerick.

Bridie laughs. Oh, Angela, you could go to Hell for that, and Mam says, Aren't I there already, Bridie?

And they laugh and drink their tea and smoke their Woodbines and tell one another the fag is the only comfort they have.

'Tis.

It is a torture to watch Mr. O'Neill peel the apple every day, to see the length of it, red or green, and if you're up near him to catch the freshness of it in your nose. If you're the good boy for that day and you answer the questions he gives the peel to you and lets you eat it there at your desk so that you can eat it in peace with no one to bother you the way they would if you took it into the yard.

There are days when the questions are too hard and he torments us by dropping the apple peel into the wastebasket. We'd like to ask Nellie Ahearn to keep the peel for us before the rats get it but she's weary from cleaning the whole school by herself and she snaps at us, I have other things to be doin' with me life besides watchin' a scabby bunch rootin' around for the skin of an apple. Go 'way.

He peels the apple slowly. He looks around the room with the little smile. He teases us, Do you think, boys, I should give this to the pigeons on the windowsill? We say, No, sir, pigeons don't eat apples. Paddy Clohessy calls out, 'Twill give them the runs, sir, and we'll have it on our heads abroad in the yard.

Clohessy, you are an *amadán*. Do you know what an *amadán* is?

I don't, sir.

It's the Irish, Clohessy, your native tongue, Clohessy. An *amadán* is a fool, Clohessy. You are an *amadán*. What is he, boys?

An *amadán*, sir.

He pauses in his peeling to ask us questions about everything in the world. Hands up, he says. Who is the President of the United States of America?

Every hand in the class goes up and we're all disgusted when he asks a question that any *amadán* would know. We call out, Roosevelt.

Then he says, You, Mulcahy, who stood at the foot of the cross when Our Lord was crucified?

Mulcahy is slow. The Twelve Apostles, sir.

Mulcahy, what is the Irish word for fool?

Amadán, sir.

And what are you, Mulcahy?

Fintan Slattery raises his hand. I know who stood at the foot of the cross, sir.

Of course Fintan knows who stood at the foot of the cross. Why wouldn't he? He's always running off to Mass with his mother, who is known for her holiness. She's so holy her husband ran off to Canada to cut down trees, glad to be gone and never to be heard from again. She and Fintan say the Rosary every night on their knees in the kitchen. They go to Mass and Communion rain or shine and every Saturday they confess to the Jesuits, who are known for their interest in intelligent sins and not the usual sins you hear from people in lanes who are known for getting drunk and sometimes eating meat on Fridays before it goes bad and cursing on top of it. Mrs. Slattery's neighbors call her Mrs. Offer-It-Up because no matter what happens, a broken leg, a spilled cup of tea, a disappeared husband, she says, Well now, I'll offer that up and I'll have no end of Indulgences to get me into Heaven. Fintan says he wants to be a saint when he grows up, which is ridiculous because you can't be a saint till you're dead. He says our grandchildren will be praying to his picture. One big boy says, My grandchildren will piss on your picture, and Fintan just smiles. His sister ran away to England when she was seventeen and everyone knows he wears her blouse at home and curls his hair with hot iron tongs every Saturday night so that he'll look gorgeous at Mass on Sunday. If he meets you going to Mass he'll say, Isn't my hair gorgeous, Frankie? He loves that word, "gorgeous," and no other boy will ever use it.

Dotty O'Neill says, Come up here, Fintan, and take your reward.

He takes his time going to the platform and we can't believe our eyes when he takes out a pocketknife to cut the apple peel into little bits so that he can eat them one by one. He raises his hand. Sir, I'd like to give some of my apple away.

The apple, Fintan? No, indeed. You do not have the apple, Fintan. You have the peel, the mere skin. You have not nor will you ever achieve heights so dizzy you'll be feasting on the apple itself. Not my apple, Fintan. Now, did I hear you say you want to give away your reward?

You did, sir. I'd like to give three pieces, to Quigley, Clohessy, and McCourt.

Why, Fintan?

They're my friends, sir.

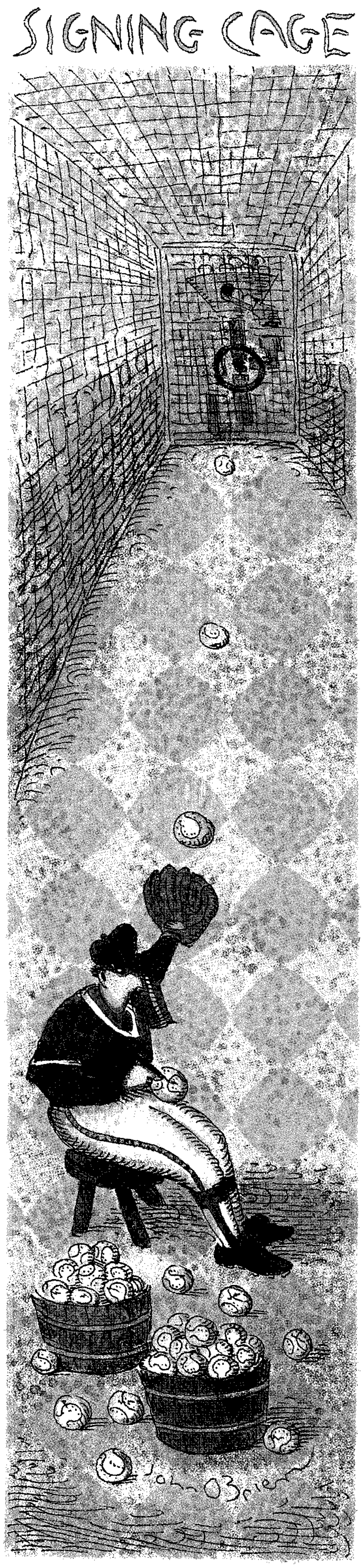
The boys around the room are sneering and nudging each other and I feel ashamed because they'll say I curl my hair and why does he think I'm his friend?

Quigley takes the bit of peel from Fintan. Thanks, Fintan.

The whole class is looking at Clohessy because he's the biggest and the toughest and if he says thanks I'll say thanks. He says, Thanks very much, Fintan, and blushes.

After school the boys call to Fintan, Hoi, Fintan, are you goin' home to curl your gorgeous hair? Fintan smiles and climbs the steps of the schoolyard. A big boy from seventh class says to Paddy Clohessy, I suppose you'd be curlin' your hair too if you wasn't a baldy with a shaved head.

Paddy says, Shurrup, and the boy says, Oh, an' who's goin' to make me? Paddy tries a punch but the big boy hits his nose and knocks him down and there's blood. I try to hit the big boy but he grabs me by the throat and bangs my head against the wall till I see lights and black dots. Paddy walks away holding his nose and crying and the big boy pushes me after him. Fintan is outside on the street and he says, Oh, Francis, Francis, oh, Patrick, Patrick, what's up? Why are you crying,



Patrick? and Paddy says, I'm hungry. I can't fight nobody because I'm starving with the hunger an' fallin' down an' I'm ashamed of meself.

Fintan says, Come with me, Patrick. My mother will give us something. Fintan's flat is like a chapel. Mrs. Slattery comes in with her rosary beads in her hand. She's happy to meet Fintan's new friends and would we like a cheese sandwich? And look at your poor nose, Patrick. She touches his nose with the cross on her rosary beads and says a little prayer. She tells us these rosary beads were blessed by the Pope himself and would stop the flow of a river if requested, never mind Patrick's poor nose.

Fintan says he won't have a sandwich because he's fasting and praying for the boy who hit Paddy and me. Mrs. Slattery gives him a kiss on the head and tells him he's a saint out of Heaven and asks if we'd like mustard on our sandwiches and I tell her I never heard of mustard on cheese and I'd love it. Paddy says, I dunno. I never had a sangwidge in me life, and we all laugh and I wonder how you could live ten years like Paddy and never have a sandwich. Paddy laughs, too, and you can see his teeth are white and black and green.

We eat the sandwich and drink tea and Paddy wants to know where the lavatory is. Fintan takes him through the bedroom to the back yard and when they come back Paddy says, I have to go home. Me mother'll kill me. I'll wait for you outside, Frankie.

Now I have to go to the lavatory. Fintan says, I have to go, too, and when I unbutton my fly I can't pee because he's looking at me and he says, You were fooling. You don't have to go at all. I like to look at you, Francis. That's all. I wouldn't want to commit any class of a sin with our confirmation coming next year.

Paddy and I leave together. I'm bursting and run behind a garage to pee. Paddy is waiting for me and as we walk along Hartstonge Street he says, That was a powerful sangwidge, Frankie, an' him an' his mother is very holy but I wouldn't want to go to Fintan's flat anymore because he's very odd, isn't he, Frankie?

He is, Paddy.

A few days later Paddy whispers, Fintan Slattery said we could come to his flat at lunchtime. His mother won't be there and she leaves his lunch for him. He might give us some, too, and he has lovely milk. Will we go?

"I brought the bougainvillea in from the greenhouse. It wasn't happy out there."

Fintan tells us to sit at the table in his kitchen and he removes the cloth covering his sandwich and glass of milk. The milk looks creamy and cool and delicious and the sandwich bread is almost as white. Paddy says, That's a lovely-looking sangwidge and is there mustard on it? Fintan nods and slices the sandwich in two. Mustard seeps out. He licks it off his fingers and takes a nice mouthful of milk. He cuts the sandwich again, into quarters, eighths, sixteenths, takes the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart* from the pile of magazines and reads while he eats his sandwich bits. I know Paddy is wondering what we're doing here at all, because that's what I'm wondering myself hoping Fintan will pass over the plate to us but he doesn't, he finishes the milk, leaves bits of sandwich on the plate, covers it with the cloth, and wipes his lips in his dainty way, lowers his head, blesses himself and says grace after meals and, God, we'll be late for school, and blesses himself again on the way out with holy water from the little china font hanging by the door.

It's too late for Paddy and me to run and get the bun and milk from Nellie Ahearn. Paddy stops at the school gate. He says, I can't go in there starving with the hunger. I'd fall asleep and Dotty'd kill me.

Fintan is anxious. Come on, come on, we'll be late. Come on, Francis, hurry up.

Paddy explodes. You're a feckin' chancer, Fintan. That's what you are an' a feckin' begrudger, too, with your feckin' sangwidge an' your feckin' Sacred Heart of Jesus on the wall an' your feckin' holy water. You can kiss my arse, Fintan.

Oh, Patrick.

Oh, Patrick my feckin' arse, Fintan. Come on, Frankie.

Fintan runs into school and Paddy and I make our way to an orchard in Ballinacurra. We climb a wall and a fierce dog comes at us till Paddy talks to him and tells him he's a good dog and we're hungry and go home to your mother. The dog licks Paddy's face and trots away waving his tail and Paddy is delighted with himself. We stuff apples into our shirts till we can barely get back over the wall to run into a long field and sit under a hedge eating the apples till we can't swallow another bit and we stick our faces into a stream for the lovely cool water. Then we run to opposite ends of a ditch to shit and wipe ourselves with grass and thick leaves. Paddy is squatting and saying, There's nothing in the world like a good feed of apples, a drink of water, and a good shit, better than any sangwidge of cheese and mustard and Dotty O'Neill can shove his apple up his arse.

There are three cows in a field with their heads over a stone wall and they say moo to us. Paddy says, Bejasus, 'tis milkin' time, and he's over the wall, stretched on his back under a cow with her big udder hanging into his face. He pulls on a teat and squirts milk into his mouth. He stops squirting and says, Come on, Frankie, fresh milk. 'Tis lovely. Get that other cow, they're all ready for the milkin'.

I get under the cow and pull on a teat but she kicks and moves and I'm sure she's going to kill me. Paddy comes over and shows me how to do it, pull hard and straight and the milk comes out in a powerful stream. The two of us lie under the one cow and we're having a great time filling ourselves with milk when there's a roar and there's a man with a stick charging across the field. We're over the wall in a minute and he can't follow us because of his rubber boots. He stands at the wall and shakes his stick and shouts that if he ever catches us we'll have the length of his boot up our arses and we laugh because we're out of harm's way and I'm wondering why anyone should be hungry in a world full of milk and apples.

THE
"THIS ITEM NOT SOLD IN ANY STORE"
STORE
Levin

I KNOW when Dad does the bad thing. I know when he drinks the dole money and Mam is desperate and has to beg at the St. Vincent de Paul Society and ask for credit at Kathleen O'Connell's shop but I don't want to back away from him and run to Mam. How can I do that when I'm up with him early every morning with the whole world asleep? He lights the fire and makes the tea and sings to himself or reads the paper to me in a whisper that won't wake up the rest of the family. My father in the morning is mine. He gets the *Irish Press* early and tells me about the world, Hitler, Mussolini, Franco. He says this war is none of our business because the English are up to their tricks again. He tells me about the great Roosevelt in Washington and the great de Valera in Dublin. In the morning we have the world to ourselves and he never tells me I should die for Ireland. He tells me about the old days in Ireland when the English wouldn't let the Catholics have schools because they wanted to keep the people ignorant, that the Catholic children met in hedge schools in the depths of the country and learned English, Irish, Latin, and Greek. The masters risked their lives going from ditch to ditch and hedge to hedge because if the English caught them teaching they might be transported to foreign parts, or worse. He tells me I should be good in school and someday I'll go back to America and get an inside job where I'll be sitting at a desk with two fountain pens in my pocket, one red and one blue, making decisions. I'll be in out of the rain and I'll have a suit and shoes and a warm place to live and what more could a man want. He says you can do anything in America, it's the land of opportunity. You can be a fisherman in Maine or a farmer in California. America is not like Limerick, a gray place with a river that kills.

At night he helps Malachy and me with our exercises. Before bed we sit around the fire and if we say, Dad, tell us a story, he makes up one about someone in the lane and the story will take us all over the world, up in the air, under the sea, and back to the lane. Everyone in the story is a different color and everything is upside down and backward. Motor cars and planes go under water and submarines fly through the air. Sharks sit in trees and giant salmon sport with kangaroos on the moon. Polar bears wrestle with elephants in Australia and penguins teach Zulus how to play bagpipes. After the story he takes us upstairs and kneels with us while we say our prayers. We say the Our Father, three Hail Marys, God bless the Pope, God bless Mam, God bless our dead sister and brothers, God bless Ireland, God bless de Valera, and God bless anyone who gives Dad a job. He says, Go to sleep, boys, because holy God is watching you and He always knows if you're not good.

I think my father is like the Holy Trinity with three people in him, the one in the morning with the paper, the one at night with the stories and the prayers, and then the one who does the bad thing and comes home with the smell of whiskey and wants us to die for Ireland.

I feel sad over the bad thing but I can't back away from him because the one in the morning is my real father and if I were in America I could say, I love you, Dad, the way they do in the films, but you can't say that in Limerick for fear you might be laughed at. You're allowed to say you love God and babies and horses that win but anything else is a softness in the head. ♦

IMAGE WORLD

BUYING THE FANTASY

The photographers who stole fashion's cutting edge.

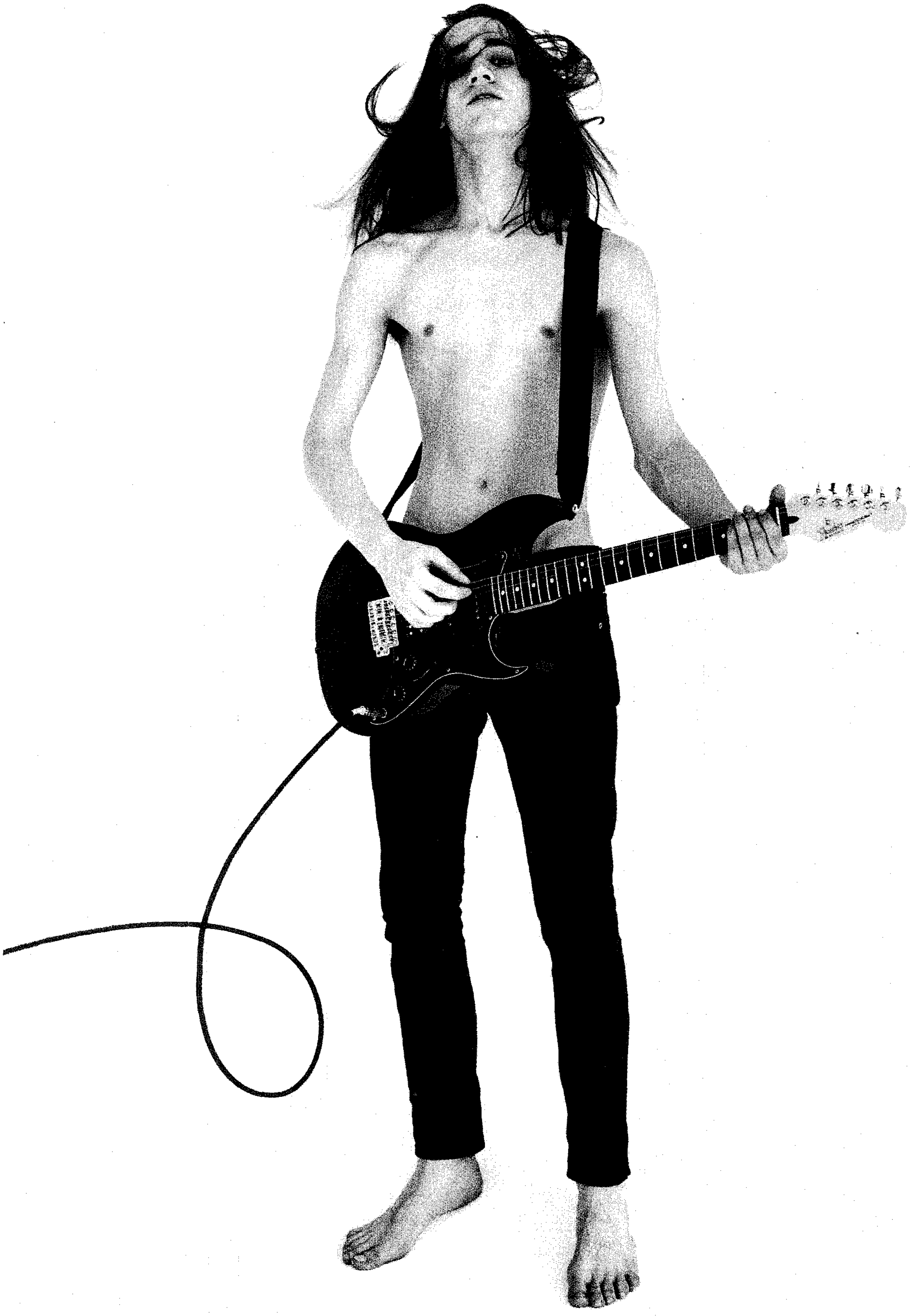
BY HILTON ALS

DURING the early part of my adolescence, nearly twenty years ago, I was drawn to the surreal four-color universe manufactured by fashion magazines. In fashion pictorials I saw something I wanted to be: a woman "captured" by the photographer's gaze and caressed by high production values that made her lips and eyes and hair shine just so. What I meant for those still, gleaming images to give back to me I couldn't say, but I used to pore over them for hours. I remember the feeling of frustration that would come over me during that period of non-exchange, and also a kind of glee: like most romantics, I thrived on rejection. I gradually gained control over the fashion magazines—over the source of so much of my self-conscious "sadness"—by becoming critical of their unreality, and of the women they featured, whom most of us could never know or hope to be.

In the intervening decades, the models I once projected my longings and dreams onto have mostly lost that gleam, and magazine readers have begun to turn to fashion advertising as their source of fashion as fantasy. The most striking of the recent ad campaigns—for Calvin Klein, Hugo, and Jil Sander, shot by Steven Meisel, Juergen Teller, and Craig McDean, respectively—suggest that the most adventurous fashion "journalism" is the ads themselves, and the best fashion "editors" are the photographers and art directors who design the ads. These three campaigns do not vie with editorial fashion for attention; in fact, editorial fashion has taken to emulating its once barely tolerated money-grubbing ugly sister—a reversal of the positions of advertising and editorial "content" which couldn't have been imagined fifteen years ago. The message these ads convey, through the raw, unstudied look of some of the photographs and the raw, dislocated look of the models, is that fashion is dead. It's a message at odds with what editorial fashion, in those four-color features about going "white for summer" or adopting "the strong suit" for fall, still tries desultorily to project—a "finished" woman, made so by fashion. The new fashion advertising has been her undoing.

In Meisel's ads for Calvin Klein's scent cK one, for example ("A shared fragrance for a man or a woman"), it is the casting that makes the campaign so mesmerizing to watch on buses wobbling across the city. Meisel has populated the campaign with ruined faces and bodies that seem to be walking away from his seamless white backdrop, and he singles out the former film star and sex kitten Joey Heatherton, whose battles with anorexia and the law have been well chronicled by the press; she stares out at the viewer like a memento mori with peroxided hair, barely a person. This approach—essentially an attempt to demythologize models as "super"—is more aggressively pursued by the ads that the German-born, London-based photographer Juergen Teller shoots. Fingernails with chipped black paint, greasy hair: these are the metaphors Teller uses to explore how trivial beauty seems in relation to depression. In a Teller ad, that depression may be economic or it may be just youthful posturing, but it is always predicated on the subject's failure to relate to the world. In the Hugo campaign, which looks like a series of B-movie stills, a dark-haired youth struggles with a woman wearing a flower-patterned dress. Their exchange is marked by a palpable silence, which has less to do with photography's silence than with the idea of the characters' failure to communicate with each other. Hands grasping, flesh made too pale by the bright light of the flash, these figures pique the viewer because of all that the ad represents: the death of editorial fashion's standard narrative involving couples (woman plus man equals shopping), and the end of an era in advertising. In the new era, ads such as Revlon's look ridiculous and outdated. Poor Melanie Griffith, hair-moussed and lip-glossed, gazes out at the viewer, as though unmindful of the fact that she seems to have been airbrushed to death.

THE beginning of the end was in 1990, when the work of a then twenty-five-year-old photographer named Corinne Day started to appear in the British youth-oriented publications *i-D* and *The Face*. Unlike the work of many of her predecessors, which relied on the usual contraptions of fashion photography ("genius" makeup and hair; improbable girls and improbable situations), Day's pictures—of models clothed in the low-budget, mismatched outfits of youth—were about her subjects' unabashed narcissism, and how it sheathed them in the glow or the gloom of self-love. Day's world unfolds in broad expanses of grimy nature, or in dingy council flats that one associates with post-Thatcherite Britain, and the type of girl Day was attracted to was not unlike her: awkward, thin, disconsolate. "That's why I photographed Kate—she was just a schoolgirl then. She reminded me of myself," Day recalls, referring to her great discovery, Kate Moss. In picture after picture, Moss conveyed the qualities that became synonymous with the offhand look of Day's images, which were meant to resemble "snaps" but were artful in their design and controlled in their execution. Her vision—of a young woman who was unaware of the corrosive effects of time as her soul rotted or played at the fringes of boredom, and unaware of anything remotely recognizable to us as "glamour"—was, at the time, original and arresting. Day began working for the American and British editions of *Vogue*, but in 1993, when her startling images of Moss in underwear appeared in British *Vogue*, "the commercial aspects of fashion



A new era began with the photographs of Corinne Day, which are about the glow or the gloom of self-love.

photography began to frighten me," Day recalls. "Kate came to me and said that her agent told her that it wasn't good for her to be seen in my pictures anymore."

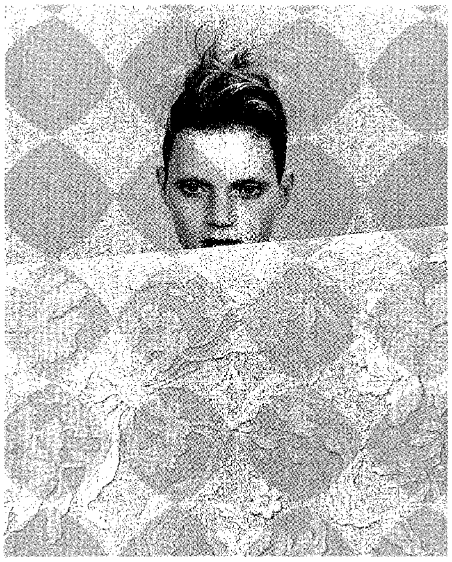
The pictures in question were in some ways Day's apotheosis as a photographer. Besides being intensely moving—Day had managed to capture on film Moss's transition from young chum to commodity—the photographs are a first testament to the fashion industry's now pervasive flirtation with death. The naked, bruised look in Moss's eyes was an apt expression of the brutality that Day was beginning to experience in the fashion world. "Corinne can't compromise, not one bit," Edward Enninful, *i-D's* current fashion editor, says. Day's increasingly challenging suggestion that fashion was not strong enough to contain anyone's fantasies made her alienation from the industry inevitable; it also accounts for the beautiful minimalism of her Barneys ad campaign from 1993. The models—slouching, walking, or sitting—were objectified totems of indifference or cool.

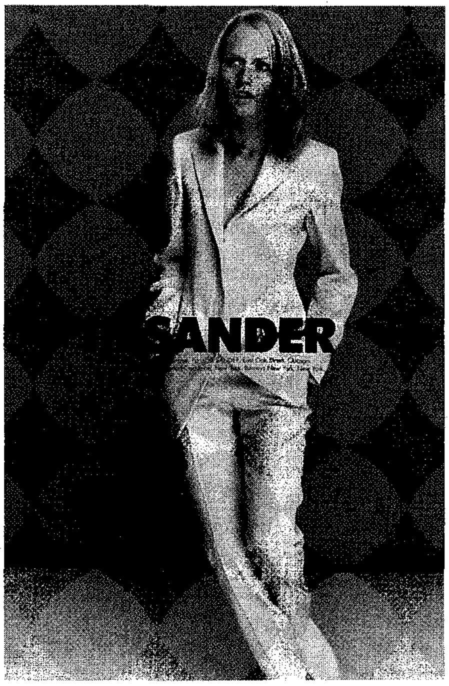
Ironically, just as one began seeing Day's poetic indifference influencing—indeed, defining—many ad campaigns and magazine pictorials, Day herself began to drop out of sight. The industry had pigeonholed her as the photographer of grunge, which was on the way to extinction; it took what it needed from her and moved on. Photographers like Meisel, Teller, David Sims, and Mario Sorrenti have all benefitted, in my view, by imitating aspects of Day's groundbreaking work, while she has pursued other interests—including directing short films for MTV. "Fashion's become an all-boy world," she says.

PERHAPS the most interesting of the recent fashion-ad campaigns are those produced for the German designer Jil Sander by Craig McDean, which evoke glass-encased wax figures. Born in 1964, in Cheshire, England, McDean, like Day, published his first photographs in *The Face* and *i-D*. The rough, unfinished look favored by those magazines was something he had explored initially as a teenager photographing his passion: motorbikes and motorcyclists. After a stint at the Blackpool School of Art, in the late eighties, McDean rejected the academicism of photo training, "which wasn't training at all," he says. "It's just teaching you how to tidy up after a photography class." He moved to London and apprenticed himself to the photographer Nick Knight. In addition to the Jil Sander campaign, McDean has received commissions from *Harper's Bazaar* and, just recently, Calvin Klein, for whom he has shot Kate Moss in sleepwear.

But in his rich, Paul Outerbridge-like printing McDean deviates from the watered-down, Day-derived raw look that most of the new fashion advertising has adopted. He luxuriates in alchemy—in revealing on the page his interest in how lighting defines a photograph. His lighting often acts—in the Jil Sander campaign, especially—as a strange kind of fluorescent accessory for the skin and hair. His highly finished veneer is probably what has made his work more commercial than Day's; he makes the "down" feel "up." But his women don't seem much affected by the concentration of light on their faces. Their dark interior selves cast it off, like a repellent; the universe that revolves around them consists only of McDean's lights and camera. The attitudes they strike seem the outgrowth of some silent distress, and one wishes, somehow, that they would stop looking in and look out.

McDean's style has just begun to be reflected in the work of photographers like Meisel, who is a survivor precisely because he knows how to imitate trends. McDean himself disavows his trendiness. "Don't call me a fashion photographer," he says, with a laugh, echoing the sentiment expressed by many photographers before him: that fashion photography is the glittering stepchild of "art" photography. "What I try to show in my work is detail." And it's true that the photographic effect of his work is naturalistic—as though he were conveying the impression of a bird by focussing on the feathers of its wing. But the ennui that has infiltrated the fashion industry is reflected in this kind of highly aesthetic advertising—and in the way its photographers want women to appear either oblivious of fashion or exhausted by it. ♦





Craig McDean, who luxuriates in photographic alchemy, creates campaigns (above and opposite) that suggest that the most adventurous fashion "journalism" is the ads themselves.

FICTION

DIAMANTINA

A boy who likes boys. A girl who likes boys. An unlikely romance?

BY EDMUND WHITE

A COLLEGE friend had told me to look up his Roman cousin, Tina. On the phone she had a wonderfully low, seductive voice and a schoolgirl's sudden, explosive laugh. She told me to come right over. I pointed out that it was three o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon, which seemed to surprise her. She laughed and said, "But I don't understand nothing you say."

Her huge nineteenth-century Roman palazzo was near the Quirinale, the President's residence, and beside a Baroque fountain so ugly that all Rome had mocked the man who made it, until he finally committed suicide. A sour-faced *portiere* opened a small, low door and growled something at me. In the dark, neglected courtyard, a thick-thighed Diana drew an arrow from a quiver, but her concrete bow had broken off and the exposed metal armature had stained her hunting skirt with rust drips. The elevator clanked noisily. I was immediately struck by how this once grand, bourgeois palazzo, now fallen into neglect, was profoundly foreign, more than the Roman churches, which I'd studied since childhood, or even my own Trastevere apartment, with its falsely luxurious interior invented yesterday and imposed on a humble old building.

Tina opened a heavily barricaded door, shook my hand manfully, and led me down a dark hall with a stone floor. We entered a cold, damp sitting room—an electric fire and a tattered couch and a chair marooned in the midst of an immense stone floor—and stood for a moment, eying each other. She seemed to be as much a stranger here as I was and just as uncertain as to what to do. She lit a cigarette and sat down and murmured "Hmmmn" on a falling note, indicating the armchair with her chin.

Stretched canvases were leaning against the walls, their backs turned modestly to the viewer. For an instant I imagined Tina as an artist and intellectual, but she turned out to be too unpredictable to be any single thing for long.

"Yes, Emanuele told me to look you up," I said, naming her American cousin. "He seems to be doing very well. Ever the dandy, of course, ordering his hats from Lock's in London with his initials stamped in gold on the sweatband."

"Cosa?" she asked, looking at me with huge liquid eyes, floating between lids as black as mussel shells. A cheap Italian cigarette, a brand called MS, burned between her yellowed fingers. She shook her head silently as though to wake herself out of a bad dream.

"I'm sorry," I said. *"Mi dispiace."*

Her eyes remained fixed on mine. In fact, she lowered her head so that she then had to look up at me. She was in a simple gray skirt and white blouse. Her hair glistened wet on the sides where she'd just slicked it back, which gave her a slightly raffish glamour. She scrutinized me so closely that I felt uncomfortable; so much attention was bound to expose my superficiality or my failings.

The room was cold and dark, and the windows were shrouded in velvet curtains that were the color of wine dregs and had gone bald both at the hem and at the height where they must have been tugged open or shut, day after weary day. Now they were shut. A floor lamp with a chromium hood—an old-fashioned dentist's lamp—was lit and trained expectantly on the velvet.

I started a sentence with the respectful form of "you" ("*Lei*") and she immediately corrected me.

An hour went by, and the smoke of our cigarettes floated across the light. I tried to communicate, putting my two hundred Italian words together in various unlikely combinations, but each attempt fell flat, and I became frustrated and ashamed. Her large, unhealthy eyes dissected me; I could feel them carving me so expertly that I could almost hear the slow, anticipatory scraping of knife on poised fork. As I became more and more hearty and despairing in the production of conversation-manual banalities, each so full of faults that I could distinctly see the big C-minus scrawled in red across my exercise sheet, Tina dropped into ever gloomier silence. She had a two-litre bottle of red wine on the stone floor beside her chair, the cheap kind of wine bought at the corner for pennies in an unlabelled bottle sealed with a metal cap, the sort of bottle that suggested it marked a daily necessity, not an occasional festivity. Her teeth were blue from it.

Just when I thought I'd exhausted her patience, she said I should stay to eat something. I followed her and stood in the doorway of her dimly lit, ancient kitchen, with its marble sink and a tiny modern stove that, to judge from the rust scrapes and stains on the wall and floor, must have been installed in the place once occupied by an immense iron oven. Tina was suddenly efficient, no longer a sibyl hanging over the smoke of her cigarette and staring into the void but a much younger woman, slim-hipped in her gray skirt, her pale, slender arms weaving the air as she spin-dried salad leaves, mixed a vinaigrette, filled a cauldron with water to cook spaghetti.

I SPENT a lot of time with Tina (which was, I would learn, short for Diamantina, a family name), who took what I judged to be a big sister's interest in me. She'd pick me up in her battered Cinquecento and speed me con-

FILIP PAGOWSKI

fidently through the narrow, clangorous streets, to where we'd have dinner, in a dark restaurant looking out at a rugged Renaissance palace across an empty, wet square. We'd eat our plate of spaghetti and nugget of veal in almost total silence. In the center of the square, a wide, ancient Roman basin overflowed in the rain, its surface smooth as polished onyx.

Tina took me by to meet her father, a tiny, wizened scholar who lived in another apartment in the same family palazzo. I was used to the American notion that parents are dull, if responsible, creatures and their children wild and fascinating, but Tina's father was as hopeless and eccentric as his daughter. He seemed to live on cheap wine, regularly forgetting to eat, turned night into day, and wore the same suit every day, although he was persuaded by his daughter every third day to change his shirt. He was usually morose—much of his thought was devoted to a hundred-page essay on time that he'd been writing for twenty years—but occasionally he'd throw a rust-colored scarf around his neck and sally forth in his old jeep. His girlfriend, an extremely elegant lady his age, invited Tina and me to her palazzo for a party, where champagne and canapés were stiffly handed around by servants in white gloves, although at midnight the hostess herself put on an apron and made us a *spaghettata*. This woman—so dazzling in her diamonds and so punctilious in her politeness—took Tina's father's bohemianism in her stride. She sat placidly beside him in the jeep, a scarf tied around her impeccable hairdo, her tiny black shoes poised over the gaping hole in the floorboard.

ONE night I was alone with Tina, the two of us sitting together marooned under a lone lamp, our armchairs and the scrap of rug underneath like elements in a cheap set hastily assembled on an immense soundstage. We were enduring yet another stretch of exhausting silence, and I was about to confess that I felt we should meet in a month's time, when I knew more Italian. But Tina spoke first and said, "I love you."

I was amazed by this declaration. I hadn't seen it coming. And while it suddenly made me feel important and desirable rather than annoying and tongue-tied, it also scared me. "But you know," I told her, "I like men."

She stared at me with her huge black eyes. She did not wheedle or seduce or whine or even argue her case; she had simply presented herself to me and that was enough, at once Salome and the head on the platter.

"*Sono frocio*," I said—"I'm a fag"—using the worst word I knew, the most shocking.

That stung her into a response. "Don't say that. You can say whatever you want—*omosessuale, invertito*—but not that horrendous word. You use it only because you don't know Italian."

I tried to explain to her the strategy of adopting the enemy's worst insult, something the new gay commune in Boston had attempted in naming its newspaper *Fag Rag*, but she merely shook her head as though awakening from a bad dream and returned to the assault: "We are *peoples*," she kept repeating in English, which I assumed meant we're individuals before we're gendered (a truism I wasn't sure I believed) and that as individuals we're as likely to fall in love with another soul as another body, with a *simpatica* woman as a dull man.

And then silence. I began to wonder how soon I could plausibly take my leave. We were both drunk, but she was drunker than I was. She seemed to let the silence collect, as though in a big cistern that was ready to overflow. She was not going to permit me to wriggle gracefully out of the situation. Does Medea let Jason off the hook? Does Phaedra give Hippolytus an easy out?

I stood and she walked into my arms. We embraced, and I found my hands travelling over her lean body, pressing her flanks through her skirt. I could feel myself kindling under her touch, but I instantly worried that I'd disappoint her, as a lover and as a husband—in my mind, the two were always linked. Every time I kissed a woman, I feared I'd be both impotent and insolvent, too flaccid to penetrate and too poor to support her. When I looked at married men, I often sympathized with their obligation to mount their wives, tirelessly, night after night—and to have to *pay* for the pleasure. In gay life, hustlers were paid to penetrate men; we assumed that passivity was always the more desirable role and that the drudgery of activity naturally had to be recompensed.

But now I was drunk, and the drink must have calmed my fears. Tina was neither decorous nor cold, and we grappled as violently as any two men might have done, and somehow I found myself in a dark hallway leading to the room where her bed glowed like a moonlit pond seen at the end of an alleyway of firs. Then she bit my nose, hard. She's mad, I thought, she's dangerous. I'm getting out of here.

"O.K., that's it," I said. "I'm leaving." I said it in English, quickly.

I had reached the hallway, groping for the light switch while fumbling to zip up my trousers, when I was overcome with the chilling certainty that Tina really was crazy and that she might try to kill me.

I didn't wait for the elevator but ran down the five flights and through the rainy courtyard, my feet striking a muffled sound off the old, mossy pavement. Behind me, I heard the elevator motor groaning into action and I knew that Tina would soon be pursuing me.

I ducked through the small door set into the *portone* and found myself on a deserted street, beside the ugly fountain that had provoked its sculptor's suicide. I was seized by the intense fear that Tina was going to run me over with her car. I started to streak down the hill past the Barberini Palace; then I spotted a side street and I ducked down it, but after I'd run another block I saw to my horror that it was a dead end. I crept back up to the main thoroughfare, hugging the shadowy wall, and arrived at the corner just in time to see a grim-faced Tina hurtling by behind the wheel of her tiny, battered car.

A bit more composed now, I went down to the taxi rank in the Piazza Barberini. I told the driver to let me off beside the square of Santa Maria in Trastevere; I would walk the rest of the way home. But as we neared the square the driver asked me if I knew this woman who had been following us.

I said to him, "Here's a bit of extra money. Could you just wait a moment while I talk to her?"

He smiled knowingly. I was, he thought, a roguish husband coming to see his Trastevere mistress, and Tina was my jealous wife; and I realized that, whereas every aspect of gay life is always regarded as aberrant, there's

"How about this? 'Old Bob Dole is a merry old soul.'"

not a moment of straight life, no matter how bizarre or melodramatic, that isn't cozily familiar, that can't be associated with a song lyric or a movie or a poem. I'd have felt ashamed if my pursuer had been a man; now there was a hint of complicity between the driver and me.

I went to Tina's car, ducked down and spoke to her through the open window. She was very pale. Like a hypnotist, I said, "You're tired and you're going to go home now and we'll speak in the morning." She nodded slowly.

I crossed the square, dim and deserted in the midnight rain. The square was closed to cars, but I kept expecting to hear Tina's Cinquecento gunning its motor as she came crashing down on me. By walking confidently away from her I felt like a torero who turns his back on a bull, stunned but angry.

After six months in Rome, I flew back to New York. It was 1970, and a friend met me at the airport, popped some speed laced with a hallucinogen into my mouth, and led me on a tour of the new gay discos that had sprung up like magic mushrooms since my departure. I was shocked by how much the city had changed. Where before there had been a few gay boys hanging out on a stoop along Christopher Street, now there were armies of guys marching in every direction off Sheridan Square. There were thousands of them, all similarly slender and mustachioed, many of them with the same loud voices and crude way of talking ("Hey, Howie, wanna cwoffee?") as the guys who used to beat us up.

I kept up a desultory correspondence with Tina. I had worked out how to say "I miss you"—"*Sento la tua mancanza*"—and after receiving my letter with that expression in it she hopped the next plane to New York. She was momentarily taken aback by the squalor of my apartment, but was pleased to see that we'd be sleeping side by side in a small bed every night: I had separated the two mattresses of my single bed and thrown them on the floor. I had found so little echo in New York of the time that I'd spent in Rome that I was happy to have Tina here—her wonderful, heady laugh, her face devoid of makeup except for the mascara tracing her huge eyes in black, her skinny flanks, the clean but unpainted nails, the eternal MS cigarettes.

She wanted to see Harlem. I found a friend with a car, and the three of us drove her up and down the streets of Harlem, Tina unable to conceal her disappointment by what she considered to be the relative prosperity, though we told her the apartments were dangerous, overcrowded, and rat-infested. She didn't believe us when we said the principal victims of black crime were other blacks. In Little Italy she was shocked to discover an ashtray bearing the portrait of Benito Mussolini. "And it looks like the past! This is Italy after the war."

"Ah, yes," I said, "America is Italy's attic, where everything outmoded—including outmoded ideas—is stored in mothballs."

"*Cosa*?" she asked, puzzled. I never understood why she went blank around me. I'd never had anyone look at me so searchingly. Was it because she was studying me sorrowfully or because she was looking at me with desire and not really listening to me? Was it because I spoke in English too rapidly or was it my faulty Italian?

One night she wept because I had never cooked her any spaghetti and she couldn't get through another day without "them." At my little stove, posed on top of the waist-high fridge, I made a rich, delicious Bolognese sauce, as roaches scuttled out to escape the heat.

But that night she threw herself over me again and I exploded. I sat up, switched on the light, lit a cigarette, and held it in my trembling hand. "Tina, this can't go on. I'm a homosexual. I don't want to sleep with you. We're friends."

"*Ma tu hai detto di sentire la mia mancanza.*"

"So what? In English that means nothing special. 'I miss my mother. I missed my train. Last night I missed my enema.' It means absolutely nothing at all."

She was in her slip, sitting up on the mattress, her hair pushed forward on one side. She looked miserable. "In Italian it means I love you."

The next day she took a train for New Haven, where she knew a tall, skinny American graduate student who'd spent a year in Rome studying Italian social structure. Two weeks later they were married.

LAST spring I was in Rome again. Tina's American cousin (the one who'd originally introduced us) had told me that her father had just died. He gave me her phone number and asked me to call her. She wanted to see me instantly.

Tina, still slender, still lived in the same palazzo, except now I was jowly and she seemed to be missing a few teeth. I told her everything I could remember about her father, and that pleased her, and she asked me to repeat my recollections to his elegant old girlfriend, who'd become his wife. Tina said her father had abandoned his little book about time ten years ago.

She told me that she'd married that American just to spite me, but the marriage had lasted only a year and a half. The big love of her life was Hector, and the two of them had lived together fifteen years.

"He died last year, and I suffered terrible *angoscia*," Tina said, sitting forward and nursing her cup of espresso between her hands, even though the day was unusually warm for Palm Sunday, "but now I'm just angry."

"Angry?"

"Yes!" She laughed wildly. "He told me he was an Argentine terrorist living in hiding, and for fifteen years we never went out. For fifteen years, we did nothing but drink. There are whole years of blackout, we were always hiding from the enemy." She sliced the air with a sideways karate chop, an Italian gesture that, combined with her smile and frown, meant that she was playfully threatening to punish a child—Hector, I suppose.

"But why are you angry?" I asked.

"Because when he died I met his entire family. They came to the funeral. They were all Romans. He wasn't Argentine, he was a Roman. For fifteen years we'd been hiding and drinking and he'd been making up stories. Even his accent was made up."

I looked at her, amazed, then burst out laughing, and she laughed, too. I told her that my young French lover, who'd died of AIDS, had pretended to be a member of the "minor nobility." It was only after his death that I discovered that his mother was a hairdresser in Nancy.

"*Cazzo*, these men!" she said. She laughed again, her huge eyes searching mine for an explanation. ♦

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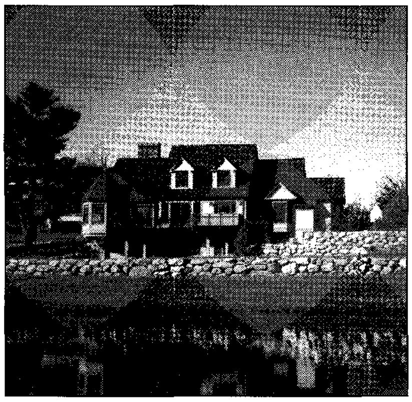

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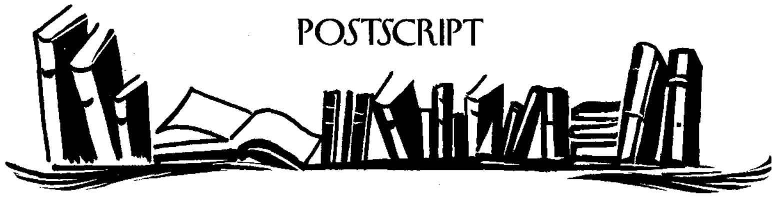


JOSEPH MITCHELL

Three generations of New Yorker writers remember the city's incomparable chronicler.

JOSEPH MITCHELL, who died on May 24th, at the age of eighty-seven, was a staff writer at *The New Yorker* for fifty-eight years and was one of its dearest and most irreplaceable friends. But his death is not merely a personal loss to his colleagues, or a loss to the magazine. He was an essential figure in modern writing and in the history of the city.

Joe was born in Fairmont, North Carolina, where his father was a well-to-do farmer and tobacco and cotton trader. There had been Mitchells farming in the area since before the Revolutionary War, and it was assumed that Joe would carry on the tradition. As an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina, however, he began writing feature stories for newspapers around the state; he even sent one piece about the tobacco industry off to the *Herald Tribune*, which thereupon summoned him to New York. Joe's father was not impressed. "Son," he said, "is that the best that you can do, sticking your nose into other people's business?"

Joe arrived at Pennsylvania Station on October 25, 1929, four days before the stock market crashed, and over the next nine years served an apprenticeship at the *Tribune*, the *Morning World*, and the *World-Telegram*. He started out as a copy boy, then covered murders and fires, manned the rewrite desk, and finally moved on to feature stories. He interviewed Tallulah Bankhead, Joe Louis, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Noël Coward; he covered the 1936 World's Fair and the Lindbergh-kidnapping trial. He became so popular that the vans delivering the paper carried ads on their flanks advertising the next Mitchell feature.

Harold Ross hired Mitchell for *The New Yorker* in 1938, and it was here that Joe developed his craft, raising the feature story—the Profile—to the level of art. His precincts were the seaport, the Bowery, the Staten Island ferry, the Village—always somewhere near the smell of the sea or the river. Now free to operate with a patience and deliberation that no newspaper could afford, Mitchell spent week after week with his subjects, listening to their stories, drinking with them, studying the patterns of their speech, watching how they worked, how they walked, how they bore the burdens of their days and nights. Then he went back to Forty-third Street and wrote his sentences. He could start a tale like no one else: "Every now and then, seeking to rid my mind of thoughts of death and doom, I get up early and go down to Fulton Fish Market."

Mitchell's metabolism as a writer was the opposite of A. J. Liebling's; Liebling, his great friend at the magazine, wrote at a blinding pace and so delighted himself with the ribald virtuosity of his sentences that he used to laugh out loud at the typewriter. Liebling was like a trumpeter whose solos were a sheet of sound, a cascade of colorful notes. Mitchell's prose was, by comparison, pristine, flinty, declarative, full of dark silences:

> I often feel drawn to the Hudson River, and I have spent a lot of time through the years poking around the part of it that flows past the city. I never get tired of looking at it; it hypnotizes me. I like to look at it in midsummer, when it is warm and dirty and drowsy, and I like to look at it in January, when it is carrying ice. I like to look at it when it is stirred up, when a northeast wind is blowing and a strong tide is running—a new-moon tide or a full-moon tide—and I like to look at it when it is slack.

To achieve that deceptively simple rhythm took great attention and, increasingly, great periods of time. A Profile might take him months or years; it took as long as it took.

Joe wrote about a New York that is now mostly gone: the New York of street preachers and bearded ladies, Mohawks and Gypsy royalty. He found in each of these subjects an element of himself: his pleasures and disappointments, his obsession with kindness, talk, and authenticity. Once, after re-reading his work, Joe said, "It turns out, when I look at these things, just about everybody is me. I didn't know it at the time, but I interviewed people like me." If you were to list Joe's characters and subjects, they might seem, in the aggregate, sentimental or quaint. They were not. His collection "McSorley's Wonderful Saloon" is this city's "Dubliners"—a book about time and life and death, set in places as vivid as Captain Charley's Private Museum for Intelligent People. In Joe's hands, an ordinary woman like his Mazie, a ticket-taker at the old Venice Theatre, on Park Row near the Bowery, becomes as affecting as Molly Bloom.

Readers who knew Mitchell's work loved him for his peculiar characters and the quality of affection he afforded them. Writers knew well that Mitchell had beaten the New Journalism to the punch by decades. But because he published his last piece—a Profile of the celebrated eccentric Joe Gould—in 1964, Joe's reputation for reluctance or perfectionism, or whatever it was, nearly eclipsed his reputation for what he had actually done. He was no more sentimental about his silence than he had been about his characters; he longed to publish again, and his struggle pained him to the core. But he won a new audience in 1992, when an editor at Pantheon, Dan Frank, persuaded him to republish his *New Yorker* pieces in an omnibus collection, "Up in the Old Hotel." The book became a best-seller, found countless new readers, and, maybe most important of all, thrilled its author. "It meant a lot to him when 'Up in the Old Hotel' came out, that it was there and well received and still stood up," said Sheila McGrath, Joe's companion in his last years.

There is a concluding note in the collection which fills the reader in on the facts of Joe's life, and at one point describes a day when he was mucking around Ashpole Swamp, in North Carolina: "Once, deep in the swamp, looking through binoculars, he watched for an hour or so as a pileated woodpecker tore the bark off the upper trunk and limbs of a tall old dead black-gum tree, and he says he considers this the most spectacular event he has ever witnessed." The attention he paid that bird was the attention he paid his characters, his sentences,

MARYLAND STUART/AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & LETTERS

Joseph Mitchell in 1959: His collection "McSorley's Wonderful Saloon" was this city's "Dubliners."

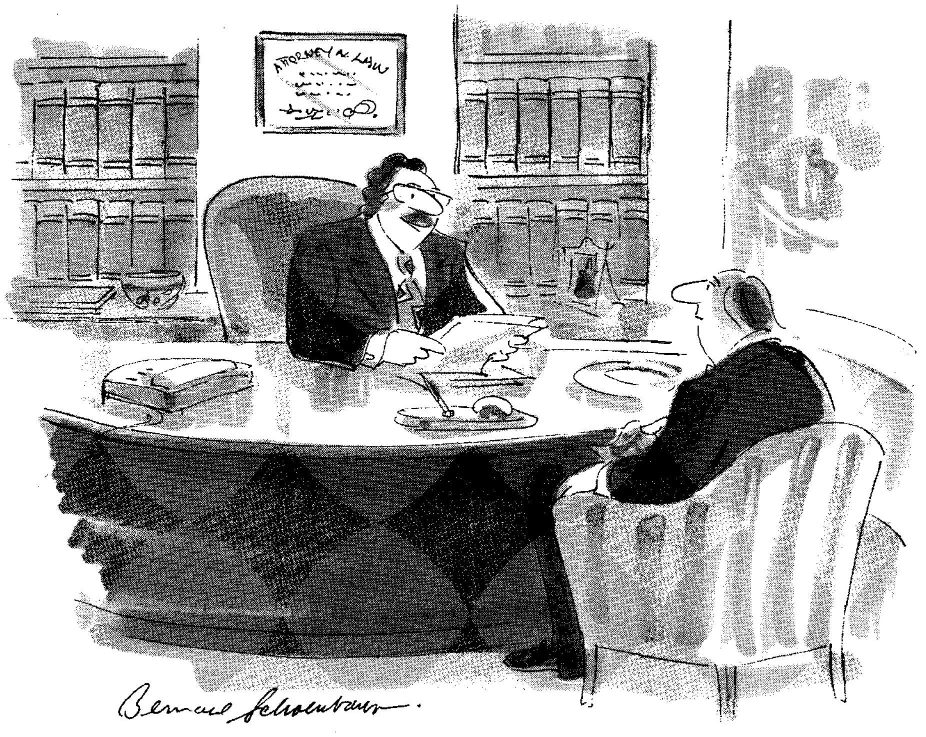
and his friends. His art was filled with the world's troubles, but it never despaired. As Joe once said, "Life's a goddam mess, but you wouldn't want to miss it." The impressions that follow are from some of the many staff members who will miss him.

•

Brendan Gill: He was a round-shouldered man with a bald pate, a big nose, blue eyes, and an old-fashioned Southern courtly presence. Though he was mostly of Scots descent, Joe loved the Irish as a people, and he would sit talking by the hour to old tads at McSorley's saloon, upon which, by having written about it, he had bestowed an unintended fame. He was also a frequenter of the bar that Tim and Joe Costello ran on Third Avenue at Forty-fourth Street, in the days before the El came down. Costello's was the hangout of a number of Joe's *New Yorker* companions, including Liebling, James Thurber, John McNulty, Charles Addams, Ann Honeycutt, St. Clair McKelway, Jean Stafford, and Maeve Brennan. Tim Costello, who had come from Ireland and was ignorant of the American past, was in awe of Joe's incomparable knowledge of New York. Joe made a habit of prowling the old downtown area of docks and warehouses and seedy hotels, and when they were being torn down, in the forties and fifties, he would seek out souvenirs amid the rubble—an ancient whiskey bottle, a broken tile. Tim said of him once, "He's a great one, Joe is, for pawin' over other people's fallin'-down properties. If he ever disappears, start lookin' for him under fifty foot of brick, with a rusty fire escape on his chest and a smile on his face."

Joe's favorite writers were Mark Twain and James Joyce; he was for decades a devoted member of the James Joyce Society, and would put in many a long evening abiding some scholar's highfalutin literary nonsense in order to feel close to Shem the Penman, his lifelong mentor. His voice, however, was more like Twain's. He wrote in the introduction to "Up in the Old Hotel" that in reading over the text he had been delighted to find in it so much of what he called "graveyard humor." Being of Baptist Presbyterian stock, he believed (or claimed to believe) in Hell and damnation, and when he was vexed by troubles that he saw as undeserved he would shake his head and exclaim "Lord a' mercy!" in a voice that was at once doomed and prayerful, with the odds plainly favoring doom.

Several months ago, the Modern Library brought out a handsome edition of his pieces about Joe Gould, and it was announced that he would give a reading at Books & Co., on Madison Avenue. I had been asked to introduce him, but when I arrived at the shop, thinking that I had come in good time, the upper floor, where the reading was to take place, was impenetrably jammed with people. So was the ground floor, where, though out of sight of the author, the audience—many of them in their twenties and thirties—could at least hear his voice over the P.A. system. I found myself imprisoned in the crowd by the front door, and Jeannette Watson, the proprietor of Books & Co., made the introduction in my behalf. By then, dozens of people had gathered out in the street, apparently content to be at a Joe Mitchell reading without being able to hear a word that Joe Mitchell read. He performed his task well, speaking in a vigorous voice, and afterward how happy he was, surrounded by friends and admirers, laughing, signing copies of his book, and, as he liked to say, "carrying on."



"Charging you anything less would be improper."

•

Roger Angell: Joe Mitchell's last piece for *The New Yorker* appeared in the magazine on September 26, 1964, and, though he came to work almost every day for the next thirty-one years and six months, he submitted no further writing. Knowing him as a colleague during this profound and elegant silence made you feel like an archeologist forever on the brink of an extraordinary find. He hadn't stopped writing, that was always clear; he was busy on a piece that hadn't quite gone right so far. Each morning, he stepped out of the elevator with a preoccupied air, nodded wordlessly if you were just coming down the hall, and closed himself in his office. He emerged at lunchtime, always wearing his natty brown fedora (in summer, a straw one) and a tan raincoat; an hour and a half later, he reversed the process, again closing the door. Not much typing was heard from within, and people who called on Joe reported that his desktop was empty of everything but paper and pencils. When the end of the day came, he went home. Sometimes, in the evening elevator, I heard him emit a small sigh, but he never complained, never explained. He was not remote, though. If you fell into a conversation, he listened with a rapt expression and a crinkly V-shaped smile of extraordinary candlepower.

No one, in my recollection, ever suggested that Joe was idle in his office, or was doing anything except writing or trying to write. No one made jokes about him, or expressed ill temper about him; there was pride, in fact, about working for a place that would indulge such an epochal oddity. The piece, when it came, would be worth the wait. The silence became famous, became a legend, but still Joe came in to work every day.

Reminders of his reportorial genius remained close at hand. The Profiles and Reporter at Large pieces—on the fish market, on city rats and seafaring rats, on those Canadian Mohawk high-steel workers, on the Hudson River shad fishermen—stood firmly and cleanly in your mind, like Shaker furniture, but sometimes you slipped back to the library files to take down his clip book once again and allow your eyes to run along those effortless corners. As we continued to long for that next piece—the one that was giving him such trouble—it came to me slowly that Joe's patience and class in enduring so many empty days had become a source of comfort and even admiration. Every writer has experienced the inner dread that this day's work, this very paragraph, may be the last one before he dries up for good—and, along with it, the inner mad conviction that this same piece may be the one that at last fulfills all hopes and expectations, the one that will hold up not just for tomorrow or next week but down the years. At both extremes of the writer's experience, Mitchell was a shining avatar.

"That's my new au pair, Mr. Cochran, formerly with A.T. & T."

•

NANCY FRANKLIN: The first piece of writing by Joseph Mitchell that I came across was something called "Tanya," in "A Subtreasury of American Humor." It's a recollection of an interview he'd done in 1936 with a nineteen-year-old named Florence Cubitt—the titular Tanya. Mitchell was still working for a newspaper then, and he'd been sent to Tanya's hotel to talk to her. He hadn't really wanted the assignment, and he had a bad cold that day, but neither of those distractions prevented him from noticing that when Tanya appeared she was wearing the same outfit she'd worn when she was named Queen of the Nudists at the California Pacific International Exposition, in San Diego, earlier that year: "She was naked. It was the first time a woman I had been sent to interview ever came into the room naked, and I was shocked. I say she was naked. Actually, she had a blue G-string on, but I have never seen anything look so naked in my life as she did when she walked into that room." By the time he got ready to go, after spending several hours with Tanya, Mitchell wrote, "my cold had vanished."

My favorite line in the story belongs to Tanya. She told Mitchell that she sometimes posed for artists: "Once one of them told me I looked like a Madonna . . . and I said, 'O.K.' " Mitchell had that same kind of authentic, accepting wonderment about him, and it made him hard to approach but easy to talk to once you got there. His loop-the-loop stories always reminded you that there were good alternatives to cynicism.

The last time I saw him, in early January, was the first time I had been in his office. I was supposed to be interviewing him for a piece I was writing, but we just talked about life at the magazine and life in the city. I was acutely aware of the fifty-year distance between us, but time and again he would bridge it by responding to something I'd said with a burst of red-faced, furrowed-brow enthusiasm. "Ah *know* it," he'd say in a conspiratorial whisper.

A few days later, two mornings after the biggest blizzard since 1947, my phone rang at home. It was Mr. Mitchell. He was already in the office; I was still in bed. We talked about the amazing weather, and he told me that once, after James Thurber had gone totally blind, his wife had told him it was snowing, and Thurber's response was "Oh, no, not another goddam fairyland." Mitchell laughed as hard at this as I did. It was the kind of remark he treasured, and treasured sharing, because it said everything—or, as he put it, it was "tragedy and comedy all balled up into one thing."

•

MARK SINGER: Once, when I was still in the short-pants phase of my reporting career, Joe invited me for a drink. We went to the Blue Bar, at the Algonquin. He was in a distracted mood—he'd just come from a funeral—and talked about Joyce and Yeats and how hard writing was. I sipped a Martini and occasionally interjected something off-key. A couple more, and I assumed control of the conversation, reducing Joe to his trademark posture—head tilted, sympathetically squinting and rhythmically nodding as he said, "Yehzz. Yehzz." He was a magical listener. Describing his newspaper days, he wrote, "Most of the time I have been assigned to write feature stories and interviews and in the course of this assignment I have been tortured by some of the fanciest ear-benders, including George Bernard Shaw and Nicholas Murray Butler, in the world, and I have long since lost the ability to detect insanity. Sometimes it is necessary for me to go into a psychopathic ward on a story and I never notice the difference."

After that, when it was possible, I liked to bring along someone who could hold up my end of the dialogue. I arranged a couple of lunch meetings between Joe and Ricky Jay, the prestidigitator, book collector, and scholar of cons and frauds. They would survey the universe of what truly mattered—Welsh gypsies, Irish tinkers' language, pickpockets, thimbleriggers, ghost-inhabited botanical gardens, A. J. Liebling. Joe would describe how Liebling, whose library he had inherited, once used a strip of bacon as a bookmark. Ricky would talk about Houdini's marginalia and then segue into Cockney rhyming slang.

Fifteen years ago, when I thought I had read everything Joe put between hard covers, someone gave me a copy of "My Ears Are Bent," a 1938 collection of his work from the *Herald Tribune* and the *World-Telegram*, plus a few early *New Yorker* pieces. It astounded me that such a book existed, and Joe seemed a little sheepish when I asked him to inscribe it. There are moments when I feel guilty hoarding this treasure, but I can live with myself. If my house catches fire, I know what I'm grabbing first—"My Ears Are Bent" and everything else on that shelf.

•

William Maxwell: There is no point in saying what everybody knows—that as a literary artist there was no one like him, though many people have tried to be. His conversation also was like no one else's. He would start to say something and then stop in order to say something different that was prompted by what he hadn't quite managed to say in his initial remark, and that sentence didn't get finished either. Instead, the unfinished statements built up like cloud castles, creating a sense of the ineffable, the almost discernible but not quite describable, out of which you emerged knowing somehow, by thought transference, what he meant. And illuminated by it. Add the soft Southern voice, the wicked snicker, and the lightness with which he moved even though he was an old man.

No one was more intransigent in the literary standards he applied to writing in general but most of all to his own. No one more charitable in his view of human failings. The sense of loss is great.

•

Calvin Trillin: I once dedicated a book to Joseph Mitchell as "the *New Yorker* reporter who set the standard." He was that to me and to a number of nonfiction writers I knew—inside and outside the magazine—during decades when most literate Americans might have had trouble placing his name. We'd trade stories about scouring secondhand bookstores in search of "My Ears Are Bent." We'd offer theories on how he managed to get the marks of writing off his pieces, so that the words seemed to have materialized on the page through no human effort.

In the seventies, while I was on a book tour in San Francisco, a newspaper reporter asked me if there were any writers I particularly admired. I said something to the effect of being willing to trade pretty much everything I'd written for a paragraph of "Old Mr. Flood" or "Joe Gould's Secret." In cold print, the quotation looked more flowery than I'd intended, not to speak of pretentious—the sort of praise that might have embarrassed Mitchell. After all, one of the theories I'd heard about why he quit handing in pieces—a theory that was offered as presumably apocryphal but somehow true in its essence—was that he'd been writing away at a normal pace until some professor called him the greatest living master of the English declarative sentence and stopped him cold.

The San Francisco interview was reprinted in some internal *New Yorker* publication, and eventually Mitchell showed up in my office, holding it in his hand.

"I wanted to thank you for the nice things you said," he told me.

"I guess I sort of got carried away," I said.

He smiled, and said, "You're not going to take it back, are you?"

No, I'm not going to take it back.

•

Lillian Ross: In November of 1944, as a fledgling reporter on a newspaper, I picked up a copy of *The New Yorker* for the first time in my life, and in it I found a piece by Joseph Mitchell about a Hugh G. Flood, aged ninety-four, "inviting me to come down to his hotel in the Fulton Fish Market district and help him eat a bushel of black clams." As I read, I knew immediately that I wanted to report and to write in a way that would be worthy of Joe Mitchell. When I joined the magazine—Joe used to call it "our paper"—I discovered that everybody else here also wanted to write in a way that would be worthy of Joe Mitchell. Nobody ever tried to imitate him, but everybody learned from him. Mystically, he gave us the key to finding our own original ways of working.

Joe loved the word "mystical" and loved talking about it. He would be the first to praise this or that piece, and we would talk about "how" he or another writer "did it," and the elements involved. He would talk about how some mystical power would take over and move our fingers over the typewriter keys, and we would laugh at ourselves.

One afternoon, when Ernest Hemingway was in town, I brought Joe over to meet him at his hotel. It seemed logical to me at that naïve point in my life to bring the greatest living fiction writer together with the greatest living reporter. Joe had read all of Hemingway's writing; Hemingway read *The New Yorker* only sporadically and had read none of Mitchell's. Both men were very shy. Hemingway and his wife, Mary, broke out champagne, and we talked about a prizefight the Hemingways had taken me to see, but fight talk didn't get us onto common ground. We were squirming. Then Mary brought in the afternoon newspapers. The headlines were devoted to the "scandal" of the moment: Ingrid Bergman was having a baby with Roberto Rossellini without benefit of marriage. Hemingway exploded with indignation at the way

"Miss Ingrid" was being judged. Joe came to attention. Miss Ingrid was beautiful and brave, he said. Everybody agreed: more power to her. The hell with the hypocrites and the jealous critics of Miss Ingrid! Hemingway said he wanted to fight her enemies. Everybody raised a glass to her. We were all in synch. A couple of hours later, Joe and I left. "Jeez," Joe said softly, screwing up his face at the mystique of it. "Wasn't that good, the way Hemingway defended her?"

•

Janet Malcolm: There is a remarkable passage in "Huckleberry Finn" about a circus act in which twenty bareback riders, "resting their hands on their thighs, easy and comfortable," as Huck reports, enter the ring, then rise to standing positions on the horses' backs and, as the horses go faster and faster around the ring, execute a series of effortless dance steps. I thought of this scene (an account of true, as opposed to sham, aesthetic experience) while trying to think of some way to describe the effect Joe Mitchell's writings produced on his students—as my generation of nonfiction writers at this magazine have always thought of ourselves. Joe's feat—which looked so effortless that some reviewers of his books actually condescended to him—was so far beyond what anyone else could do that it inspired no envy; it simply inspired. As listening to Mozart is widely known to be a cure for flagging creativity, so reading Mitchell has been famous among writers as a remedy for stuckness. After reading a few of Joe's easy and comfortable sentences (about matters of life and death), one would blush for the flaccidity and pretentiousness of one's own effort; Joe's work forced one to take more risks and put on fewer airs.

Joe himself progressively risked more and more. As his pieces got more complex and profound, they took longer to write. In 1964, after writing his masterpiece, "Joe Gould's Secret," he undertook a work so labyrinthine and deep that at his death it was still not finished. Much has been made of the fact that Joe didn't publish anything for thirty years. To his friends this was not remarkable; it was simply another sign of Joe's seriousness about writing. During his period of patient struggle with unimaginably daunting artistic problems, Joe retained the preternatural gaiety, charm, and lovableness of his days on the lower slopes of literature. If there was an unkind word ever spoken about Joe, the person who uttered it must have been mad or thinking of someone else.

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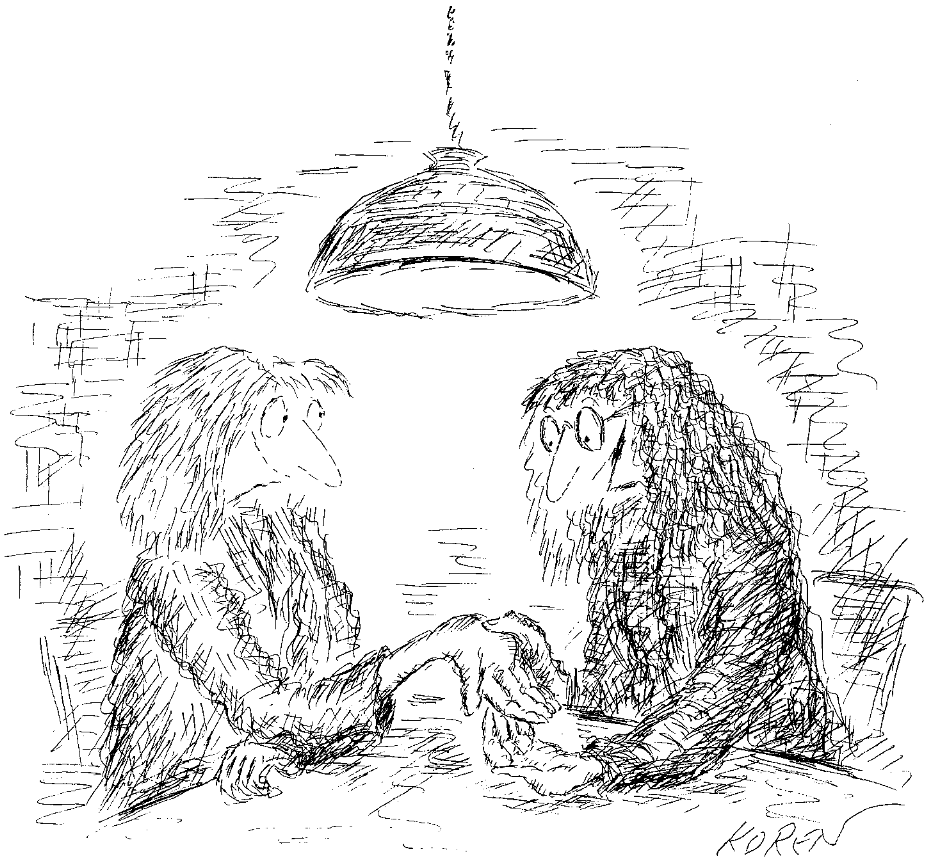
Philip Hamburger: Joseph Mitchell and I were close friends for some six decades. When I heard that he was gone, I comforted myself by dipping into his work. There they are, the stray phrases lodged forever somewhere in the subconscious. From "Lady Olga," the bearded lady: "If the truth was known, we're all freaks together." From "Old Mr. Flood": "I love a hearty eater, but I do despise a goormy." Over the long years, there were hundreds of lunches and dinners, walks and talks, but what suddenly swims into mind is a long and lazy Saturday some thirty years ago when Joe asked me to join him in a visit to a man he deeply admired, Mr. George H. Hunter, the distinguished chairman of the board of trustees of the African Methodist church, who lived in a house with lightning rods on the south shore of Staten Island, and who had been immortalized by Joe in a story called "Mr. Hunter's Grave." Mr. Hunter must have been close to ninety, perhaps older. It was his birthday, and he had prepared a royal chicken fricassee and a memorable lemon meringue pie. We ate and talked and walked away the afternoon. We visited the Sandy Ground cemetery, where Mr. Hunter planned to be buried. Joe had a special kinship with cemeteries. Like waterfronts and wildflowers, they soothed his bouts of gloom. To capture the spirit of that afternoon, and of my friend, I must quote from Joe's story itself, describing a similar visit, with Mr. Hunter talking: "After dinner, we sit around the table and drink Postum and discuss the Bible, and that's something I do enjoy. We discuss the prophecies in the Bible, and the warnings, and the promises—the promises of eternal life. And we discuss what I call the mysterious verses, the ones that if you could just understand them they might explain everything—why we're put here, why we're taken away—but they go down too deep; you study them over and over, and you go down as deep as you can, and you still don't touch bottom." ♦



"A wonderful cat is coming into your life."

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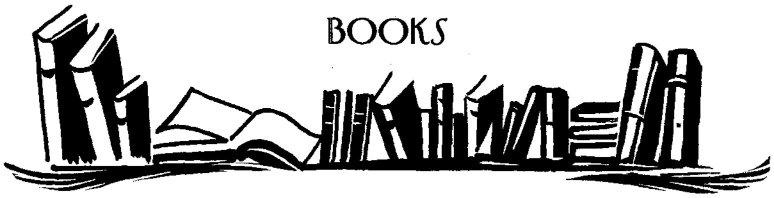


RAGING BULL

Dennis Rodman and the sports confessional.

BY DAVID REMNICK

CHILDREN yearn to read about exemplary lives, and the children of the television age inevitably select the objects of their passion from the little screen. If the doings of Achilles had been televised when I was growing up, I might have memorized the Iliad and pursued a career in Hellenic studies, but, as it happened, Channel 9 broadcast the Knicks and Channel 11 the Yankees, leaving me in a state of addiction and with no choice but to read and reread the stories of such noble Athenians as DeBusschere and Reed, Mantle and Ford. Often my friends and I would read these books at the rate of two or three a day—consuming them like literary Cheez Doodles. Each tale had its thematic importance: Bob Gibson's "From Ghetto to Glory" was a Dickensian struggle against modern-day Gradgrinds; Ted Williams' "My Turn at Bat" was, like "Le Morte D'Arthur," a primer in the art of noble battle; Gale Sayers' threnody for his teammate Brian Piccolo, "I Am Third," was our version of "To an Athlete Dying Young"; Joe Namath was our Frank Harris, introducing us to sexual delicacies in the masterful "I Can't Wait Until Tomorrow, 'Cause I Get Better-Looking Every Day."

And then there was the moral instruction of Sandy Koufax's autobiography, "Koufax," written with the assistance of a greatly underestimated ghost, Ed Linn. (Linn is often overshadowed in literary studies by the suspiciously prolific Maury Allen and Phil Pepe.) In my circle, "Koufax" was known simply as the Talmud. While I was a pupil of dubious standing at the Temple Emanuel Hebrew School, I successfully recycled on an annual basis my classic Linn-lifted dissertation, "Sandy Koufax: Great Pitcher, Greater Jew." By recounting with increasing fervor and commitment the story of Koufax's legendary refusal to pitch a World Series game on Yom Kippur, I sidestepped any need to work up a new paper on the traditional twin towers of adolescent Jewish studies—Rabbi Akiba and Sammy Davis, Jr.

I pull this juvenilia down from the shelf not to riffle through its dusty pages but, rather, to understand the meaning of a current phenomenon. Dennis Rodman's "Bad As I Wanna Be" (Delacorte; $22.95) is No. 1 on the *Times* nonfiction best-seller list. How are we to account for this? Rodman is a certifiable star in a mainstream sport, and yet one is curious about how, as a matter of literary history, we got from the herculean tales of Mantle and Mays to the confessional style of an athlete who poses on the book jacket with his bare *tuchis* flush to the camera and who writes that to "put on a sequined halter top makes me feel like a total person and not just a one-dimensional man." This is not the first athlete confessional. (There are times, in fact, when it seems that the athlete memoir has picked up where "Life Studies" and "Ariel" left off.) So why is Rodman riding (literarily speaking) so high?

It is true that Rodman's team, the Chicago Bulls, is on its way to a National Basketball Association championship. Moreover, Rodman has famously unburdened himself of the details of his romance with Madonna Ciccone. ("She wasn't an acrobat, but she wasn't a dead fish either.") When Rodman first met Madonna, he told her that "I didn't like her music." But, he insists, "that was the one thing about this relationship—we were totally honest with each other. I told her that her house in Los Angeles sucked." In what must surely be the most selling passage in the book, Rodman describes his first night of intimacy with Madonna—more particularly, how he denied her a sexual favor that the lady had said would "get me loose."

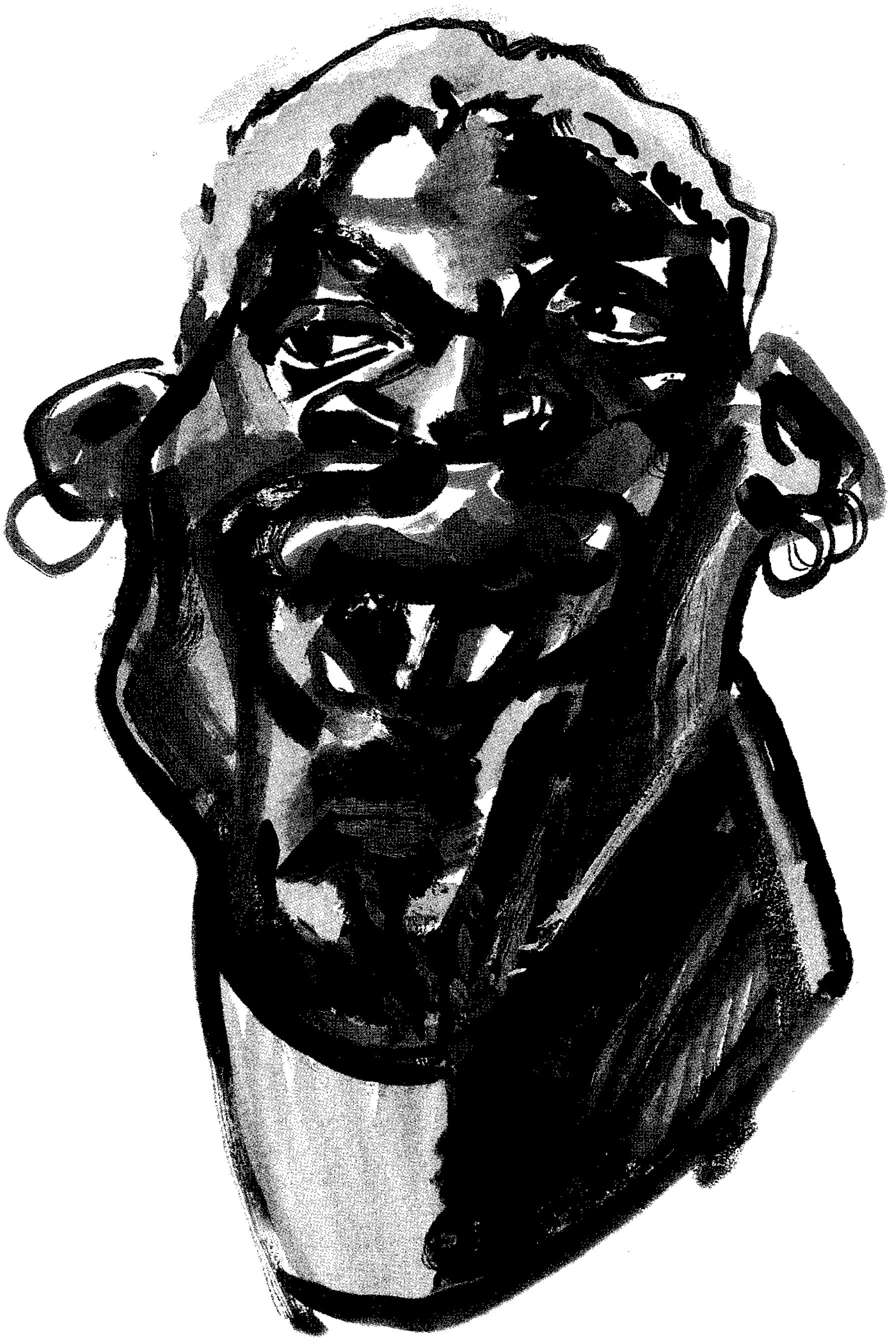
"Believe me," our hero said. "I won't do that, darling." And, he duly reports, "I didn't do it. I think she was a little surprised that I said no to her, but I did: I said NO to Madonna."

Admittedly, a scene as gallant as that is also in Rodman's commercial favor, but, still: No. 1?

BEFORE the advent of television, the pivotal sports books were works of inspirational fiction, much like the homiletic prose inventions of Parson Weems. ("Father, I cannot tell a lie. I chopped down the cherry tree," etc.) John R. Tunis's "The Kid from Tomkinsville" and "World Series," exemplars of the form, were sandlot tales of effort and sportsmanship. Many of the early ballplayers, including Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth, eventually found ghostwriters (Al Stump for Cobb; Bob Considine for Ruth), but only after their playing days were long over. Autobiography existed, but not as the dominant form. I think I know the reason. As Roger Angell has pointed out in these pages, when baseball was the preëminent American sport, before the Second World War, it was a game known mainly through radio, sports columns, and box scores. In order to see a player, one had to actually go to the park, and even at the stadium there was a sense of enormous distance. One was never close enough to begin wondering about a player's wife, his history, his halter top.

The books of my childhood, however, derived from our intimate access to the game through television. We knew the players with the help first of the zoom lens ("Look, there's a fly on Boog Powell's ear!") and then of the biographies. The books themselves followed strict narrative patterns: triumph over tragedy, victory through work, etc. As a result, a thoroughly unpleasant man like Mantle could be portrayed as an archetype. We learned of Mutt, Mantle's doomed and devoted father, and of the way Hodgkin's disease haunted the entire clan, generation after generation. But we were spared the details of ol' No. 7 being hung over in the dugout on game day and of his womanizing on the road.

It's not as if no one knew any better. Ty Cobb, Hemingway once said, was "the greatest of all ballplayers—and an absolute shit." Cobb's ghost, Al Stump, suffered every indignity possible in a literary venture. Old, psychotic, and sick, Cobb hurled empty booze bottles at Stump, and even threatened him with a



With Rodman's "Bad As I Wanna Be," we are on the edge of a new form: autopathography.

PHILIP BURKE

pistol. Needless to say, none of this unpleasantness was recorded in "My Life in Baseball: The True Record," published in 1961. The contractual agreement among star, ghost, and publisher was that the publisher would hire the ghost to delineate and glorify the deeds of the star as a noble man: ghosts were meant, as Plutarch wrote of his own approach to the lives of Alexander and Caesar, "to epitomize the most celebrated parts of their story, rather than to insist at large on every particular circumstance of it." The athlete in question was then meant to live up to the chronicle; he was not required to read it. The great Phoenix Suns forward Charles Barkley was once asked about a particular remark he had made in his autobiography, "Outrageous." Barkley didn't even fake it. "I was misquoted," he said.

Times have changed, of course. Stump eventually did write an independent account of Cobb's life, portraying him in all his ugly brilliance. But that came in 1994, thirty-three years after Cobb died. Wilt Chamberlain, for his part, wrote a book in which he claimed to have slept with twenty thousand women (a scoring record that will stand even after his hundred-point-game mark has been broken). But Chamberlain's confessional was also late: he retired from basketball eighteen years before its publication.

The book that changed everything in the commercial sports-literature field was Jim Bouton's baseball memoir, "Ball Four," which came out in 1970. Although Bouton had known some winning moments as a pitcher, next to teammates like Mantle he was a pipsqueak. As a writer, however, he was fresh, funny, and irreverent, informing an astonished public that some players cheated on their wives, popped pills, and, during the national anthem,

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looked up the dresses of women in the stands—a practice known among the Yanks as "beaver-shooting." The book was, at once, elevated to the best-seller list and denounced by everyone from Bowie Kuhn, the baseball commissioner, to Dick Young, the reactionary *Daily News* columnist, who wrote, "I feel sorry for Jim Bouton. He is a social leper. He didn't catch it, he developed it." Trying to imagine the commotion around "Ball Four" now is a bit like wondering what all the fuss was over "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon." Bouton's younger readers tended to appreciate him; the older ones thought he had "torn down" heroes and betrayed what was inevitably called "the sanctity of the game."

As it turned out, of course, one might as well have tried to resist free verse. Publishers would continue to put out reverent books about sports heroes—the shelves are filled with hagiographies of everyone from Michael Jordan to Joe Montana—but Bouton had changed the form.

THE history of the sports autobiography most closely parallels that of the other form of literary junk food, the Hollywood life story. But, since the sports-trash form tends to do its work on a younger and more impressionable audience, it is more important. I don't know of many kids who are terribly interested in the life of Tom Cruise, or are under any misapprehension that what Tom Cruise does is as difficult as hitting a major-league curveball.

I can still remember with a weird clarity hundreds of details from books I read before I was twelve. And, whether I like it or not, I can already see signs of this fascination in my elder son, Alex, who is almost six. Five seems to be the genetically encoded starting point. I made the mistake of once taking Alex to a Mets game when he was not quite four: after he made his way through a hot dog, a pint of Coke, popcorn, another Coke, and a miniature batting helmet filled with chocolate ice cream, he declared his desire to get back on the subway and go home. It was the top of the second. And yet the next year he started drawing pictures of Patrick Ewing and wearing a Knicks road jersey as pajamas.

So far, Alex's loyalties are imitative. He has declared himself a Knicks fan and a registered Democrat. But he has also taken a disturbing interest in the opposition: he has, for example, told me that Michael Jordan is "real awesome" and Scottie Pippen is "also real awesome." He doesn't know quite what to make of Dennis Rodman. Kids are not often scared or offended by the bizarre, but they are deeply curious—they notice everything. Certainly Alex has noticed what there is to notice about Dennis Rodman. "Why is his hair red?" he has asked. Or yellow. Or green. And "Why can't I tattoo my shoulders?" One day, to help him understand, I'll give him "Bad As I Wanna Be." Like when he's thirty-two.

RODMAN is not the only player-litterateur who is selling himself as an anti-hero, but most of his competitors do nothing to risk shocking the consumer of fast food and sneakers. Barkley's "Outrageous" is full of "controversial" chat, but he still manages to rake it in with McDonald's ads. "Bad As I Wanna Be" ("with Tim Keown") goes well beyond Bouton's "Ball Four," getting in our collective face with an absolute, and desperate, authenticity. There is no whimsy. Here we are on the edge of a new sports form: autopathography.

The book opens with the scene of Rodman, at the height of his talents, sitting in his pickup truck with a rifle and "deciding whether to kill myself." His championship team, the Detroit Pistons, is being dismantled; his coach and father figure, Chuck Daly, is gone; his marriage is a ruin; he is a tortured mess. Mostly, Rodman was haunted by the undeniable truth—that if he were not six feet eight and a master of the art of grabbing a basketball as it bounces off the rim he would more than likely be dead or back in the hole he came from.

Rodman grew up in Oak Cliff, a dismal housing project in Dallas. His father was the aptly named Philander Rodman. He ran out on the family when Dennis was three years old. As Rodman tells the story, his sisters were successful students, while he himself was slow, homely, and, in general, a disappointment to his mother. He felt rejected by everything and everyone around him. "There have been many times, none of them recent, when I sat back and wished I was white," he writes. "I grew up in the projects, where everyone was black. But I feel I was abused within that culture. I wasn't accepted there. I was too skinny, too ugly, too something."

At nineteen, when so many of Rodman's eventual peers in the game were already assured of multimillion-dollar contracts, Rodman was adrift: homeless at times; working odd jobs at others. He had barely played any organized basketball. "I was a nobody, just bumming around with some hoodlum buddies." He worked the graveyard shift as a janitor at the Dallas–Fort Worth Airport but was fired for stealing fifty watches from the gift shop. Having flunked out after a semester of junior college, he ran across a coach from a tiny school in Oklahoma who thought he had some promise. Rodman became a twenty-one-year-old freshman. (At twenty-one, Shaquille O'Neal was already a bazillionaire and had published an autobiography, "Shaq Attaq!"—a book with all the spontaneity of a Pepsi ad.)

At Southeastern Oklahoma University, Rodman proved himself an eerily tireless player, notable as much for his effort as for his skills. Suddenly, he was accepted in a community; he knew, though, that it all depended on his ability to play ball. "When I was twenty, those people would have crossed the street to get away from me."

Rodman was drafted by the Detroit Pistons as a "project" player; that is, the coaches wanted to see if a twenty-five-year-old rookie could play with men who had been stars since they were in the sixth grade. Rodman more than acquitted himself on the basketball court. What was really difficult was learning to cope with the impossible strangeness (no matter how delicious) of being a poor, lonely kid one day and an impossibly rich object of desire the next.

"Fifty percent of life in the NBA is sex," he writes. "The other fifty percent is money." Rodman is exaggerating only slightly. As a newspaper reporter, I covered the N.B.A. for a season, and wherever the players stayed the hotel lobby resembled the waiting room at a modelling agency. The women fairly auditioned for them. One reporter told me that a player he covered—one of the greatest in the history of the game—used to have a friend roam the arena for him searching out the best-looking women; the friend would line up the women he had selected, and as the player headed for the bench he would nod his approval or disapproval of the gathered chattel. "This is the ultimate turnaround," Rodman writes. "When I was a kid, the girls made fun of me and didn't find me attractive at all. I was skinny and small and they thought I was funny-looking. Now, they all want me. Too many of them want me." (For the record, Rodman does not believe Chamberlain's boast of having slept with twenty thousand women: "That's three or four women a day for fifteen to twenty years. I dare anybody to keep up that kind of pace.") But while Rodman, like so many of his colleagues, availed himself of his sexual privileges, he did it, he tells us, with a darkness in his soul: "Once you've had a total stranger ask you to fuck his wife while he watches, you're not going to be easily shocked. There's only one thing that shocks me: I'm still here."

Rodman is hyperaware of his mortality, both as a man and as a commodity. Because he's not much of a shooter (the skill that attracts the most attention in the N.B.A., and thus the biggest salaries), he must do the dirty work of basketball: defense, setting screens, and, especially, retrieving the missed shots of others.

About basketball itself, Rodman is a cultural conservative. He despises the "fifty-year-old white men," the executives who crowd every second with bogus entertainment: "You've got guys flying off a trampoline to dunk a ball, you've got dancing gorillas and highlight shows during time-outs." This is the sort of grouchy rant that Michael Jordan, with his awareness of his place on the corporate marquee, would never indulge in.

Rodman not only resists the N.B.A.'s blandishments to be a "role model" (a dubious concept plucked out of the social-science jargon of the fifties) but insists on his own confusions. "Sometimes I don't even know who I am, and these people are calling me their hero?" The sports-addicted American public now has a player willing to describe his sexual anxieties (he fantasizes about making it with another man); a black man who admits that his alienation from black culture is so deep that his favorite band is that icon of Seattle grunge Pearl Jam; a star who shows up late at the opening of a new arena in San Antonio because he wanted to go as a blond and "the damned bleach job took too long." I am not sure

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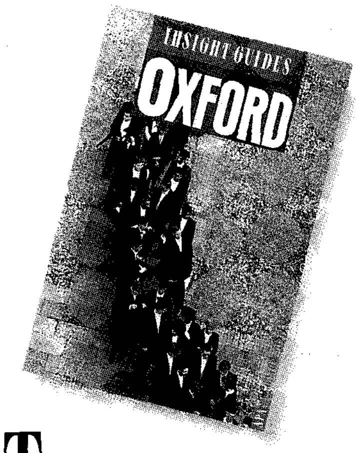

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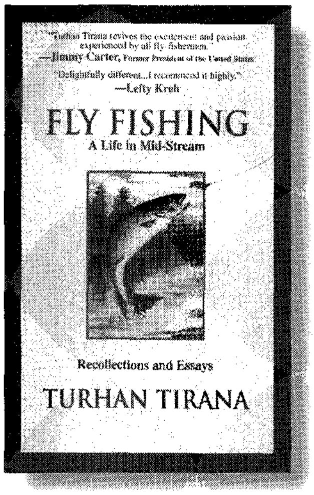

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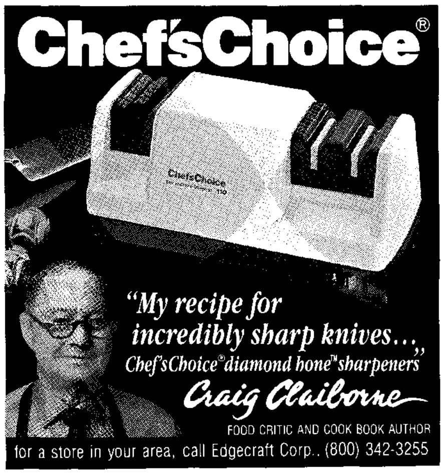

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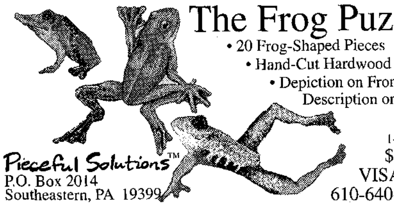

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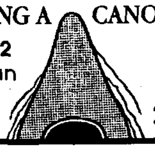

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we have ever known a star athlete so eager to tell us that he paints his fingernails and that his pickup truck is pink and white. Whereas Michael Jackson denies up and down his ambiguities in a music world that would be more likely to accept them, Rodman celebrates his in a realm of conspicuous machismo:

> I don't think painting my fingernails is a big deal. It's not like I'm sitting home by myself, trying on lingerie. That's not my style. I don't do lingerie. . . .
>
> When I cross-dress now, it's just another way I can show all the sides of Dennis Rodman. I'm giving you the whole package, I'm becoming the all-purpose person. . . .
>
> I'm not gay. I would tell you if I was. If I go to a gay bar, that doesn't mean that I want another man to put his tongue down my throat—no. It means I want to be a whole individual.

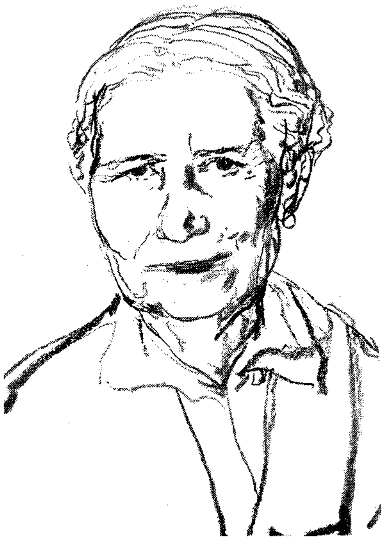
RODMAN is right to complain that he is making only two and a half million dollars a year when inferior, lazy players like Derrick Coleman make three times that. But sometimes his insistent honesty is just too much. His insults directed against other players are unappealing and so are his attempts to portray himself as unawed and superior to nearly everyone he encounters. ("I said, 'I'm Dennis,' and she said, 'I'm Madonna,' and we both said, 'Great.' ")

At least one teammate, John Salley, claims that Rodman gives himself an easy ride in the book, but I think our man comes across with some real truth. Jordan's sponsors demand of us that we "Be Like Mike." Rodman wants to be a different kind of hero, a frontiersman of the soul. He is an embodiment of the times: a gender-bender filled with racial anxiety. As Rousseau puts it in his own confessions, Rodman can claim to have "shown myself as I was; contemptible and vile when I was so; good, generous, sublime when I was so." In the end, we like him—or, at least, we don't mind him. Besides, it's hard not to look forward to the future performances of one who says, "I want to play my last game in the N.B.A. in the nude." He gives us a reason to go on living. ♦

SHE CAN'T HELP IT

Remember falling in love?

BY BROOKS APPELBAUM



Doris Lessing

MICHEL FAVRE-FELIX

FEW writers can do with a title what Doris Lessing can, so at first glance her latest—"Love, Again" (HarperCollins; $24)—seems strangely deflated: an almost irritable rejection of the music that imbues "The Grass Is Singing," "The Summer Before the Dark," and "Briefing for a Descent Into Hell." Lessing then presents us with the incense of high culture in a dedication to Stendhal, Proust, and Colette, among others, and a formidable roster of acknowledgments that includes nearly everyone from Shakespeare and the Brownings to Bob Dylan and Archbishop Whately, of Dublin. With friends like these, who needs enemies? Or reviewers? Or, you feel tempted to ask, late-twentieth-century readers?

Fortunately, those who persevere beyond the novel's first pages will find that Lessing, in juxtaposing this lustreless title with the sovereign artists of passion and grief, has demonstrated her usual acuity. To say that this book is about something as lyrical as memory or loss would be to miss, or misconstrue, its essence: "Love, Again" is really about the sawdust sensation of knowing that one's darkest despair and brightest ecstasy have been felt and expressed before, and better; and that, ultimately, their expression doesn't help.

Sarah Durham, Lessing's protagonist, is not a typical romantic heroine—as she herself would briskly acknowledge. She is the talented and practical manager of a successful theatre company in London; she is sixty-five, has been a widow for thirty years, and has long since dismissed romance from her life. Not surprisingly, the plot centers on her falling in love, again—"forgetting the hard law that says you must suffer what you despise." At first, her suffering is empathic: she becomes haunted by her project of adapting for the stage the journals and music of Julie Vairon, a beautiful turn-of-the-century French artist of mixed blood who, rejected by the families of her two great loves, chose to live in isolation as an assiduous observer of the self. Sarah also forms a close friendship with Stephen, a wealthy middle-aged backer, who is driven by a destructive yearning for the long-dead woman. During rehearsals, however, Sarah's safe distance from emotion evaporates: she becomes obsessed with a magnetic, immature young actor and is then deeply attracted to the play's mercurial American director, who returns her feelings but chooses to remain faithful to his wife. Of such exasperating, monogamous "Yanks," Sarah remarks caustically to Stephen, "Don't forget they have to divorce and remarry every time they fall in love."

These stories of frustrated longing form the novel's only action, and, unfortunately, they soon become stale. Except for Sarah and Stephen, the characters are by turns wooden and insubstantial, and the numerous scenes of non-coupling are rendered in the shorthand that Lessing characteristically uses for such things. It is a shorthand that she has elsewhere rendered tonic and tough, but here one senses a tart impatience with the conventions and the craft of realism. It's as if Virginia Woolf, after her famous dismissal of "this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner," had forced herself to write "Middlemarch," gritting her teeth all the way.

There is another reason to think about Woolf, however, for the book incorporates a second, interior perspective: this is the voice of Sarah, dissecting her love and grief with the ruthless precision of a forensic pathologist. These passages of private interrogation—occupying more than half the novel—radiate the analytical purity that has always been Lessing's greatest strength; and Sarah's determination to confront recurrence, resignation, and banality inspires genuine pity and terror. There is nothing new to be said about falling in love, as that merciless comma in the title implies. The experience is an "again" for all of us, since the events that create, and almost inevitably distort, our need for love occur long before we can control them. As Sarah realizes, falling in love is often merely an opportunity to measure how much those events, and our memories of them, have come to control us.

By the novel's end, Sarah's anguish has almost disappeared: "She stood in a landscape like that before the sun comes up, one suffused with a quiet, flat, truthful light where people, buildings, trees, stand about waiting to become defined by shadow and by sunlight. This is the landscape recommended for adults." Virginia Woolf rejected this landscape, and Lessing responds by dismissing Woolf, who is conspicuously absent from the acknowledgments and the dedication. Instead, she shows up in the guise of a minor character named Virginia, who is greatly improved when she trades in her "wispy chignon and droopy clothes" for a stylish modern haircut.

One wishes, however, that Lessing, like Woolf, had included more of the interior voice and left out more of the "appalling narrative business." Yet if she had she would have blunted her novel's flintiest point: that the fractured, shimmering mirage of romantic love does not get us on from lunch to dinner, and that getting on from lunch to dinner is, at least, one certain way to survive. ◆

JORDAN, Mont., April 11—Two members of the Freemen, a militant anti-government group that has held off law enforcement officials near here for almost three weeks, turned themselves into Federal Bureau of Investigation agents late this afternoon.—*The Times.*

If you can't beat 'em. . .

BRIEFLY NOTED

OPEN HEART, by A. B. Yehoshua; translated from the Hebrew by Dalya Bilu (Doubleday; $24.95). A hospital administrator and his wife set off to rescue their daughter (hepatitis, India) accompanied by the narrator, a methodical surgery resident. But once the three arrive, it's the young doctor who contracts the wasting ailment that courses through this novel: his improbable love for the administrator's plump, pampered, middle-aged wife. Yehoshua, thanks to a sympathetic bedside manner, turns the peevish narrator's observations—about open-heart surgery, burning ghats along the Ganges, devious adultery, anesthesia, sex—into a galloping East-West epic mingling passion and the transmigration of souls.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM, by Kate Atkinson (St. Martin's; $22.95). Bunty Lennox is the kind of intolerant, ever put-upon mother who is regarded as perfectly acceptable by onlookers, though she does have a way of letting her daughters die or disappear; the youngest of them, Ruby, feels that the animals in her father's Yorkshire pet shop love her more. Ruby's knowing descriptions of her family make their awfulness a rich joke. But by the novel's end, when she finds that she has known everything about the Lennox history except the single fact that affects her most, her story has deepened to a moving seriousness.

SHOWDOWN: THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE GINGRICH CONGRESS AND THE CLINTON WHITE HOUSE, by Elizabeth Drew (Simon & Schuster; $25). This report, at a midpoint between journalism and history, is a lesson in the volatility of American public opinion. When Drew's thoughtful narrative opens, the Republicans' sweep of Congress appears to have paved the way for an irresistible surge of right-wing legislation designed to remodel this country's institutions. That didn't happen. Drew shows us the frustrations of the Republican right and its leaders' loss of popularity as the voters have second thoughts.

OF TIGERS AND MEN, by Richard Ives (Talese/Doubleday; $24.95). The author, a naturalist and a tour guide, describes his quest for tigers and comes to the sad conclusion that wild tigers will soon be extinct. All over Asia, he finds that their habitats are being destroyed by human population growth. Ives's personal style involves us emotionally; we share his excitement and fear whenever he succeeds in glimpsing or encountering a tiger. But he doesn't attempt to sentimentalize his subject: its glamour lies in its ferocity and untamability.

NANCY LANCASTER: HER LIFE, HER WORLD, HER ART, by Robert Becker (Knopf; $40). Lancaster, who died in 1994, at the age of ninety-six, was an influential interior and garden designer. Since she specialized in England's castles and stately homes, this biography, liberally spiced with candid passages of memoir, isn't a practical guide for most readers, but its fascinations are innumerable. They include intimate Anglo-American social history (Lancaster, like her aunt, Lady Astor, was born in Virginia), equally intimate views of great art and architecture, and a striking portrait of a perfectionist.

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CORRECTION

In the "European Waterways" special advertising section (April 22, 1996), Istanbul was incorrectly identified as being located at the entrance to Marmaris Bay. Istanbul is, in fact, located along the Bosphorus Strait. Marmaris Bay is found along the Lycian Coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Additionally, travelers wishing to charter a *gulet* (Turkey's indigenous sea-going vessel) can do so on the Lycian Coast of Turkey, not in the Marmara Sea as was mentioned in the section. For information on Turkey, contact the Turkish Tourist Office at **1-212-687-2194.**

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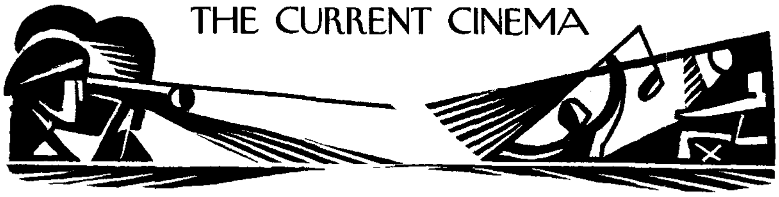
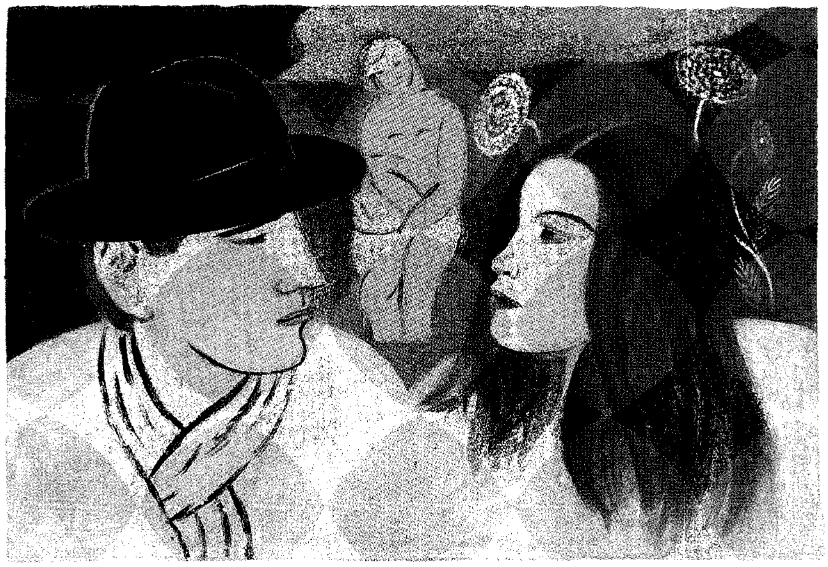


FIRST TANGO IN TUSCANY

"Stealing Beauty" and "The Horseman on the Roof."

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE good news about "Stealing Beauty," the new movie from Bernardo Bertolucci, which opens June 14th, is that it is set in Italy. The bad news is that it is set in Tuscany. Seasoned Bertolucci watchers have been praying for some time that the director would stop the globe-trotting, cut down on the lusciousness of movies like "The Last Emperor," and return to his homeland—the scene of his strongest work. So now the guy comes back, and what does he do? He heads straight for the Sienese countryside and introduces us to a pack of English-speaking intruders whose sole function is to discourage us from ever going near the place again. In other words, the man behind "The Conformist" and "1900"—films that felt as if they *had* to be made, as if the artist had a duty to dramatize his country's disease—has now decided, in his wisdom, to give us Italy without the Italians.



Jeremy Irons and Liv Tyler: Her innocence meets his experience in Bertolucci's new film.

FAY JONES

The intruders are a mixed bunch, though not quite mixed enough; they have no defining force of character, merely a shared boredom and bonelessness. There is Diana (Sinead Cusack), who lives in an isolated villa with her husband, a sculptor (Donal McCann). At least, I think he's her husband; I spent much of the film wondering who on earth most of the people were, how (or if) they were related to one another, and why I didn't care either way. I was positive that Richard (D. W. Moffett) was married to Miranda (Rachel Weisz), given the steady rattle of their bickering, until it turned out that he was married to someone else. As for the old guy played by Jean Marais, I never did place him, but still—Jean Marais! The pleasure of seeing the star of "La Belle et la Bête" alive and working was so intense that it almost overcame the groggy embarrassment of his actual performance; did Bertolucci deliberately encourage him to ham it up? The sadness is that "Stealing Beauty" is by and large a badly acted film; in aiming at liquid languor and a haze of emotional incest, it gives the performers almost nothing to bite on. Even Jeremy Irons, whose haughtiness can usually be relied upon to lend any movie a certain acidity, a dry chill of intelligence, shuffles to and fro looking lost; he plays a house guest named Alex, a playwright within spitting distance of death, but the film's mania for sophistication makes his pain more precious than melancholic. Bertolucci does to Irons what Visconti did to the Dirk Bogarde of "Death in Venice": he deadens the dying.

Into this merry setting comes Lucy (Liv Tyler), a family friend who flies in to stay at the villa and generally to ripen her soul: think Daisy Miller with jet lag. As the film proceeds, you realize that its title, "Stealing Beauty," is in part a coy, rather eighteenth-century euphemism for the relieving of virginity. Lucy is nineteen and is still a pure maiden—a highly unlikely combination, but out of it arises the whisper of a plot. Who will deflower the American girl? Will it be one of her fellow-guests? And, if so, how can she be sure that it isn't her own father? Lucy's late mother, we gradually learn, was a poet, and a suspiciously close friend to some of those now staying at the villa, where Lucy believes herself to have been conceived; Alex remembers the mother "writing transporting little verses in between fashion shoots." I am sorry to say that this line is delivered with no more than a drop of irony; one basic problem with the film, which was written by Bertolucci and Susan Minot, is that only at rare intervals do the characters express themselves in ordinary human speech. There are jokes here, of a kind, but you can never swear that they are intentional. Everything is very slightly off-key, just enough to set your teeth on edge.

All of which may, of course, be the point of the picture. Bertolucci may simply be registering his disdain for our expectations of realism, and tuning his uneventful tale to the pitch of fantasy. It certainly looks like a half-waking dream, the sort of erotic pastoral that might filter through a boozy brain after a long lunch. No other living director can equal Bertolucci's devotion to texture, his mastery of the illusion that the very skin of film is sexy; "Stealing Beauty" is often about nothing more than the work and play of light and the supersaturation of burnt-earth colors. The camera that pursues Lucy as she dives into a pool and glides along the bottom has its own matching fluidity, a rhythm halted only by a cutaway shot to the near-naked figure by the side of the water—Miranda, lounging there like a Matisse odalisque.

The movie's gaze is surprisingly unlubricious, somehow managing to remain cool and classical in the heat; when Lucy spies a young couple smooching under a tree, the camera travels upward to a stone creature perched nearby on a wall, looking pretty severe. Again, the title brims with suggestion: the beauty of this scenery is so obvious, such a common aesthetic currency, that the only way to endow it with any novelty or thrill is to steal it—to grab it on the run and move on to something else. If you want a smart answer to the drooling manner in which "A Room with a View," for example, lingered over the vistas around Florence, check out the chopped editing of Lucy's journey at the start of "Stealing Beauty": Bertolucci leafs briskly through the landscape as though it were a book. If only he were able to keep that momentum; sadly, by the end of the picture we are right back in Merchant-Ivory territory, with lovers canoodling before a bargain sunset. Lucy has finally settled on her elected predator—the shiest in a series of sensationally unappealing local lads. The film honors her integrity in this matter and grants her instant bliss, never daring to suppose that she might, like the rest of the world's teen-agers, merely stumble through the fumble and get it over with.

The actual ravishing is a dreary, pop-video affair; it plainly didn't cross Bertolucci's mind that the hippest (and most arousing) of options would have been to skip the climax altogether, to cut from chase to afterburn. The trouble with "Stealing Beauty" is not that it's dirty—it's not quite dirty enough, to be honest—but that its tastefulness and reverence for glamour soften the whole enterprise into what you might call higher pornography. The movie is stuffed with horrible types whom the director alone seems to find worthy of our attention; it's like "Kids" with a tan. If these curious, moneyed creatures want to strip and gambol by the pool, fair enough; but as they continue to unveil and display an engorged set of feelings that seem bereft of all motive you sense that a peculiarly glossy fraud is being perpetrated. The film passes off "in" jokes as velvety secrets and cheap gossip as philosophical rumination. When Alex turned on his heel, smacked his walking stick in fury, and strode away from Lucy, all because Diana had told

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Lucy that she, Diana, had heard from him, Alex, that she, Lucy, was still awaiting her first lover, I'm afraid that I gave up. "We don't mean you any harm," Alex tells Lucy later. "Up on this hill, the only thing we have to talk about is each other." So why not give it a break?

There is one commanding reason to see this movie, and that is Liv Tyler. Not the performance of Liv Tyler: just Liv Tyler. I'm not really sure how good an actress she is; some of her line readings come out stiff and graceless, and she seems happiest when she's allowed to forget the daunting fact that she is taking part in a film—when she puts on a Walkman, for instance, and thrashes around her bedroom as if trying to flush the delights of Tuscany out of her skull with a tide of rock and roll. But there are extraordinary moments in "Stealing Beauty" which feel like hours—suspensions of normal time, as the indulgent frippery that surrounds Lucy just falls away and leaves her stranded, alone with the camera. It's as if Bertolucci were confessing, to himself as much as to us, that he has got the movie wrong, that it was never going to make the grade as an elegant comedy of manners—that its true subject, in short, is Tyler's face. Leaning over the lip of the bathtub, or posing—hair drawn back, one breast exposed—for the sculptor, she stares with disconcerting directness at the lens and dares it to look away. The whole drama of innocence and experience that Bertolucci planned but failed to achieve in his plot is there in these closeups, as strong-boned and swollen-mouthed as those of Liv Ullmann in "Persona." Bertolucci's movie—roasted, ravishing, and ridiculous—is a piece of toy cinema compared with Bergman's great interrogation of troubled spirits; the inhabitants of "Stealing Beauty" find life less a trouble than a drag. But only the most confident and contemplative of moviemakers have the nerve to peel their art back to essentials: lights, camera, countenance. As Alex says to Lucy when his wasted frame is being stretchered out of the house for the last time, "I've so enjoyed watching you."

"The Horseman on the Roof" is set in Provence—an area that is even more overrun than Tuscany, and therefore the second-most-photographed landscape in Europe. (The winner, as ever, is Venice. No one should make movies in Venice. No one should be allowed to take a camera.) An excess of available gorgeousness scarcely represents a challenge—how can a beauty spot look anything but beautiful?—and the real triumph would be to make an ugly, grungy film about such places. This is not a consideration that worries Jean-Paul Rappeneau, the director of "The Horseman on the Roof." There is not a frame of his work that you couldn't blow up and paste onto a table mat.

The story takes place in 1832. Angelo (Olivier Martinez), an Italian hussar, arrives in Provence seeking refuge from vengeful pursuers, only to encounter a virulent outbreak of cholera. He learns a way to treat it: undress the victim, splash on some alcohol, and rub it all over. This exciting *frottage* comes in handy when, toward the end, he has to revive the body—or, more likely, the body double—of Juliette Binoche. She plays Pauline, a mystery woman whom he met when he came through the eponymous roof. She wants to find her distant husband, and Angelo wants to help. He always wants to help. He combines the forbearance of a nurse with the lissomeness of a natural athlete. He's a saint. He's a champ. He's a complete pain. It doesn't help that Martinez is one of those unfortunate actors whose good looks make them more rather than less credible onscreen. His thrusting jaw suggests a man who is determined to find some underwear to model before the close of the day.

How very different from Rappeneau's last movie, "Cyrano de Bergerac," which took its cue from a nose. It's clear that the director has decided to specialize in padded and cushioned costume epics; whether he knows how urgently they require a solid core is another question. The delicacy of "Cyrano" depends on the long reach of its comedy—on the robust conviction that it is possible to be heroic and mock-heroic at the same time. "The Horseman on the Roof," however, has a vacuum where the hero should be, with predictable results. It's a grand, humorless movie in which everything happens but nothing matters; Angelo and Pauline are so brave and noble, for instance, that they never even get to make out. There are sword fights, fistfights, and just plain fights; there are lynch mobs, frightened children, and an admirably cool cat; there is every variety of derring-do. And yet, when you look back at the film, you realize with regret that derring never really did. ♦

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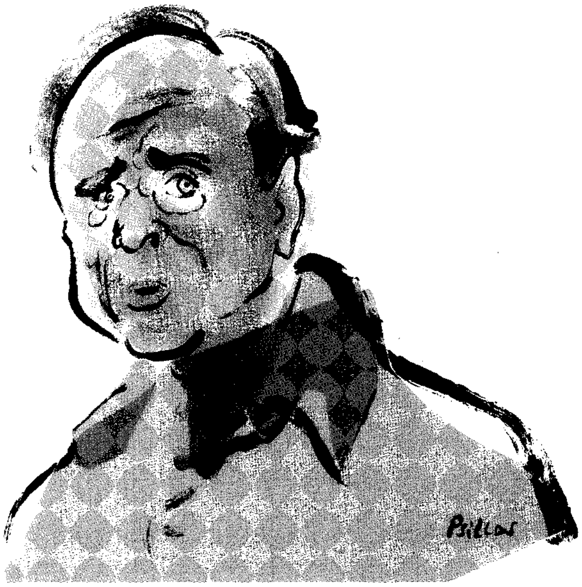
THE THEATRE

EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

"Arts & Leisure" and "Curtains."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

WHATEVER you think of Steve Tesich's "Arts & Leisure," now at Playwrights Horizons, you have to give the author a citation for bravery. The play is about an intelligent but emotionally sterile drama critic, and on the surface it's just the kind of thing that a touchy, insecure person who makes a living as a drama critic—not that I personally *know* anyone who fits that description—might want to sink his or her rabid teeth into. But I've had my shots, and, besides, I liked the play, which isn't really about a drama critic at all; it's about how easy it has become for people to shut themselves off from the world at large and the world at home. At the beginning of the play, Alex Chaney (Harris Yulin) addresses the audience and says that we've all become drama critics, that we judge events by their dramatic impact—their impact on *us*, not necessarily on the people to whom the events are happening. He talks about how the Kurds have, as it were, fallen off our map: "There was a time when the plight of the Kurds was a very dramatic event. Iraqis were killing the Kurds and we were profoundly moved by their plight. . . . But then, less than a year later, when the Turks started killing the Kurds . . . the plight of the Kurds was no longer dramatic at all. So it would appear that death of itself and by itself is no longer automatically dramatic. If it is or not depends on who's killing you." Alex holds up head shots of his family members and introduces them to us "in order of appearance," as if they were merely fellow-actors who by chance were appearing in the play that is his life. When his mother (Mary Diveny) comes to visit him at his apartment—furnished with a few theatre seats and a fish tank, the ultimate in disengaged spectating—and starts talking about Alex's dying father, Alex tries to shape and contain her responses: "We could, for example, have a breakthrough in our relationship, if you're in the mood for that. . . . Father is dying in agony, I know, but that's no reason for this scene to die as well. . . . There is still time for us to have a wonderful mother-son scene. The kind that I find so moving." It's the same with his daughter (Elizabeth Marvel), a runaway who has returned after several years and told her father that after all this time what she still really wants is just to be loved by him. He breaks off from their conversation to talk to the audience, as if to gain sympathy by the sheer fact that he is exposing his limitations: "I care for her. I worry about her. I want her to be happy. . . . When you put it all together, it's just like love, but she doesn't want love that's just like love, she wants to be loved instead."



Harris Yulin as a drama critic without a conscience.

What keeps all this from becoming impossibly hortatory is the steady stream of self-deprecating humor: Tesich has planted criticisms of the play in the mouths of the characters. Under the direction of JoAnne Akalaitis, the brilliant Frances Conroy gives a nervously alive performance as Alex's ex-wife, a former actress on the verge of a mental breakdown, and Yulin is good as a man on the verge of nothing. The part of Maria, Alex's live-in maid and "conscience"—a foulmouthed Thelma Ritter is what she is—was played well enough by Randy Danson; perhaps my dissatisfaction with the character had to do with my not believing that Alex actually had a conscience. You can take issue with the play's generalities, but I found its psychology compelling, its world view sound, and its message—forgive me, Mr. Tesich—entertaining.

SCOTT ELLIOTT, a young director who did outstanding ensemble work last year with Mike Leigh's "Ecstasy," has done it again, with "Curtains," a new play by the English playwright Stephen Bill, about the discomfort of old people—and the discomfort old people cause in others. The play is set in a drab Birmingham living room, and it opens with a birthday party for Ida (Kathleen Claypool), who has turned eighty-six. As her family tries to fill the air with cheer they don't actually feel, Ida looks miserable, and how could she not, when her grown daughters are standing over her shouting "Blow, Mum! Big blow!" while she stares down at the cake they've plunked on her lap. Only Ida's grandson, Michael (Frederick Weller), seems to care about what Ida might really want: he sportingly gives her a puff of his cigarette.

Late that night, Katherine, one of the daughters (Laura Esterman), carries out the promise she once made to her mother, who had asked her to make sure she wouldn't end up living a life without dignity. The scene is as difficult to watch as if it were happening in real life—Katherine muffs her first two attempts—and the characters spend the rest of the play arguing about the rightness of the deed and confronting their own ambivalence about it. The actors—the rest of the cast members are Jayne Haynes, John Henry Cox, David Cale, Betty Miller (she's wonderful as a helpful and extremely annoying neighbor), and Lisa Emery—distinguish themselves with vivid characterizations, and though some of the relationships are difficult to sort out, the tangles aren't real dramatic faults; they suit the subject. Unlike the ugly brown couch in Ida's living room, this play isn't covered with plastic. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

SUMMER BLOCKBUSTERS

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

CHIPPER: An evil entrepreneur (Patrick McGoohan) devises a scheme to supply his chain of fast-seafood restaurants with fresh seviche by catching Pacific dolphins and processing them with onboard shredding machines. His plans are complicated by a marine biologist (Kurt Russell) who is convinced that seahorse hooves hold the secret to a cure for prostate cancer, and by a spunky salvage hunter (Jennifer Aniston) who has trained a pod of dolphins to find Amelia Earhart's plane.

EMISSION IMPOSSIBLE: I.M.F agents (Charlie Sheen, Courteney Cox) set out to start a war between two ruthless Middle Eastern dictators (Martin Landau, Joe Pesci) by convincing them that they are impotent.

EXTERMINATOR: When a pest-control specialist (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is accidentally transported back in time to the fourteenth century by a faulty supermarket-checkout scanner, he decides he might as well try to catch the Norway rat that brought the bubonic plague to Europe. After offending the wife (Sandra Bullock) of a Venetian doge (Danny DeVito) by suggesting that the rat might be hiding in her dress, he persuades her to join forces with him against a corrupt ship owner (Alan Rickman) who is transporting the rat to Amsterdam under orders from an evil vizier (Patrick McGoohan) seeking revenge for the defeat of the Muslim hordes at the Battle of Tours.

PLIGHT OF THE OSPREY: A Marine test pilot (Brad Pitt) is told not to worry when the control stick of his tilt-rotor plane keeps coming off in his hands, but after a Defense Department procurement officer (Demi Moore) tells him that the aircraft's engines are powered by slave labor they decide to take matters into their own hands and Osterize the evil defense contractor (Patrick McGoohan) and his chief designer (John Turturro).

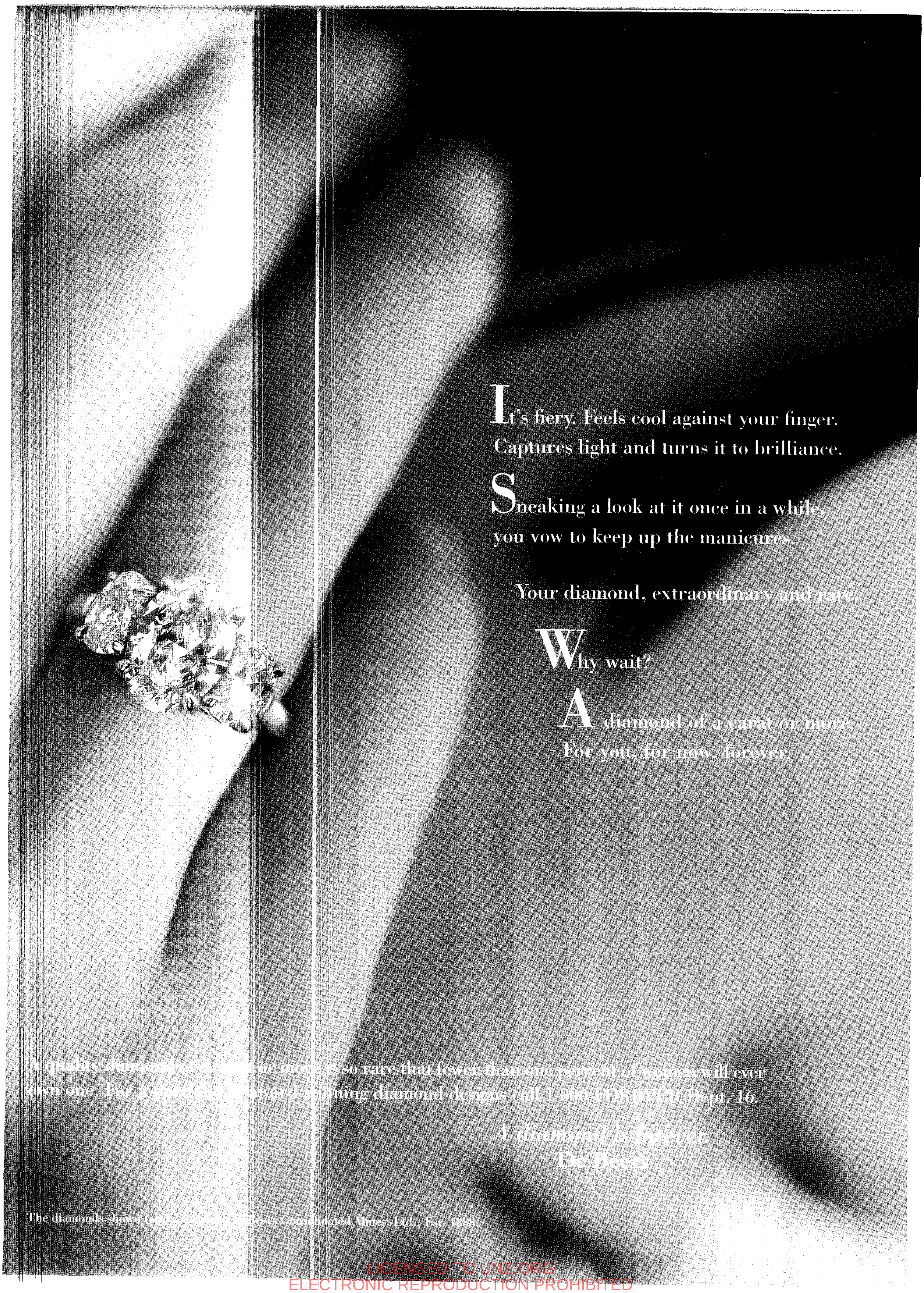
MAYA: A pre-Columbian archeologist (Ed Harris) discovers a runic horoscope predicting that the New York Stock Exchange will crash in seventy-two hours unless five hundred virgins are sacrificed to the god Chachacha. When he and the N.Y.S.E. president (Meg Ryan) realize they have little hope of locating five hundred virgins in Manhattan before the deadline—or, indeed, ever—they enlist the help of a legless computer hacker (Elijah Wood) and a Guatemalan shaman (Jimmy Smits) to outwit the deity and in the process make a tidy profit by shorting the market. Written and directed by Michael Crichton.

S.W.A.K.: An orthographically challenged philatelist (Johnny Depp) advertises in the personals for someone of similar interests and finds himself mixed up with a stockbroker (Maria de Medeiros) with a penchant for oral sex.

NO, HOUSTON, *YOU* HAVE A PROBLEM: The crew of a U.S. space shuttle (Denzel Washington, Helen Hunt, William Baldwin), tasked with performing experiments to determine the effects of weightlessness on the mating habits of fruit bats, detects an asteroid the size of Liechtenstein on a collision course with the earth. A heated argument breaks out when Mission Control orders them to deflect the asteroid by ramming it with their craft.

DWAGONHEART: A tenth-century knight with a speech impediment (Keanu Reeves) must slay a mythical half kangaroo, half garden slug before a beautiful princess (Patsy Kensit) will make merry with him. But just as he is about to behead the repulsive creature it reveals (voice by Dick Cavett) that the beautiful princess has already made merry with all the other knights in the fiefdom.

BAYWATCH, THE MOVIE: A Chinese military satellite containing plutonium lands in the bay and starts turning beach babes and dudes into gnarly mutants. Local authorities clash with the military over who has jurisdiction. As bureaucrats argue, it becomes clear that the lifeguards must remove the toxic debris themselves, using their bare hands and those orange lozenge lifesaver things. Lt. Hank Hunk (David Hasselhoff) and Tiffany Topps (Pamela Anderson Lee) find themselves in a race against time with a band of renegade Australian lifeguards, who plan to recover the satellite themselves and sell it to the Russian mafia so they can afford to buy imported beer. ♦



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